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Ptolemais in early European research and topography of the city in travellers' accounts

The history of European travels and expeditions to Cyrenaica is a story of few names and events¹. All North African countries that had been incorporated into the Ottoman Empire in the 16th century were difficult to access for reasons geographical and political. Libya was no exception. Theoretically it was accessible both by sea and by land, but either route was fraught with danger. Difficulties at sea were posed by piracy, widespread in this part of the Mediterranean Sea². American and European ships frequently fell into the hands of pirates, so the threat of being taken captive, a fate that had befallen numerous travellers, was real³. Centres notorious for piracy were Tunis, Tripoli, and the island of Djerba located between these two cities. The land route from Egypt was equally challenging. The vast Libyan Desert was a difficult obstacle to overcome. Overland travels took many weeks and were sometimes perilous, as proven by the story of the tragically interrupted expedition led by General Heinrich von Minutoli⁴.

The political situation did not make them easier. The Libyan territory, formally controlled by the Sublime Porte, was ruled by pashas and, since early 17th century, by deys. However, although these officials were appointed by the authority in Constantinople, they were only nominally subordinate to the sultans. In the period 1672-1711 alone Tripoli saw 24 subsequent foreign deys, completely corrupted and equally hated by the local Libyan population, which demonstrated its aversion also towards other foreigners, especially Europeans who practiced a different religion. Therefore, for many years Libyan territory was only accessible to Arab travellers. Their accounts, written in Arabic, did not make this country more familiar to Europeans until the

was well prepared and the accompanying scholars and artists could have greatly contributed to the studies on the region. Unfortunately, in the vicinity of the Gulf of Solum, which marked the border between Egypt and Libya, the scholars met with hostility of the locals and decided to return to Egypt. General Minutoli was the first to turn back to Cairo (27 October) and the rest of the expedition (25 persons including 6 Europeans) began a return to Alexandria on 14 November: H. Minutoli, *Reise zum Tempel des Jupiter Ammon und nach Oberägypten, mit Atlas* (Berlin 1824); cf. also *Podróż Henryka Barona Minutoli do Świątyni Jowisza Ammońskiego w puszczy Libijskiej i do wyższego Egiptu w latach 1820 i 1821*, in: *Dziennik podróży lądowych i morskich* I, no. 3 (Warszawa 1827) 230-249; II, 17-35, 141-163. On H. von Minutoli cf. *Neue Deutsche Biographie* XVII (1994) 549-551 s. v. Minutoli v., Johann Heinrich (H. Nehls); *Idem*, *Der Altertumsforscher Nicolaus Johann Heinrich Benjamin Freiherr Menu von Minutoli (1772-1846)*, *FuB* 31, 1991, 159-168. On the expedition cf. recently J. Karig, *A Prussian expedition to Egypt in 1820 Heinrich von Minutoli*, in: P. Starkey – J. Starkey (ed.), *Travellers in Egypt* (London – New York 2001) 70-74; rec. M.W. Daly, *Northeast African Studies* 7, 2000, 172-176.

¹ This article was partly written during a stay in Rome, possible thanks to the Lanckoroński Foundation and a research grant I received in 2007.

² G. Fisher, *Légende barbaresque. Guerre, commerce et piraterie en Afrique du Nord de 1415 à 1830* (Alger 1991).

³ Among writers mentioning this fact is a Polish traveller through Marocco, Jan Potocki – cf. J. Potocki, *Podróże* (Warszawa 1959) 132-138. In years 1668-1678 alone pirates from Tripoli captured as many as 104 Christian ships.

⁴ General von Minutoli headed the first Prussian scientific expedition to Egypt (1820). During the expedition, attended among others by his wife and by other savants – Ehrenberg and Hemprich, philologist from Bonn August Sholz, sailed up the Nile from Cairo to Aswan. H. Minutoli himself planned to visit Cyrenaica approaching it from Egypt after a month's stay in Alexandria and before heading south. The expedition



mid-19th century⁵. Nevertheless, rare works describing cities of North Africa were available in Europe also prior to this time. The earliest-known was the account of the 12th-century author al-Idrisi, first published in the original in early 16th century, and then in 1619 – in Latin translation⁶. In the 16th century Europeans also obtained valuable information on Africa from the work of Leo Africanus⁷.

Even after overcoming initial travel difficulties, the stay in the country, as well as moving around it, was very risky due to the local population's attitude towards Europeans, who differed from them in appearance, customs and religion.

The entire Libyan territory was not explored simultaneously. Tours of Tripolitania began after the establishment of diplomatic offices in Tripoli (17th century). A treat for anyone interested in ancient history was Leptis Magna, which quickly became a source of antiquities imported to Europe (e.g. in 1688 marble columns and statues were sent by a French consul to adorn the residence in Versailles⁸, while other ancient architectural fragments found their way Brest in France and the Windsor Castle in England⁹). The European penetration of North African Muslim countries became easier from the 18th century onwards. Cyrenaica was attested

in ancient pagan and Christian sources, nevertheless it remained practically unknown until the beginning of the 18th century and its archaeological exploration began somewhat later than in other countries of the Mediterranean Orient¹⁰. Cyrenaica was rather ill-reputed as a place where, due to the lack of true authorities, no visitor felt safe¹¹.

At the same time this region stirred the imagination and its abundance of ruins attracted the attention of not only diplomatic, but also scientific milieus in Europe, especially in France and Great Britain. All those who came to Cyrenaica began their itineraries in Benghazi, which was the seat of the local governor and a regional capital (fig. 1). Although founded on the ruins of the ancient city of Euesperides/Berenice¹², in modern times Benghazi was considered a dull town lacking picturesque ruins, which had been destroyed by natural and human activity. However, many enthusiasts of antiquities stressed how easy it was to obtain artefacts there. This fact is mentioned by several authors of accounts (among them Claude Lemaire, Agostino Cervelli and Paolo Della Cella), as well as diplomats based in Benghazi. George Dennis quoted the opinion of “a itinerant French doctor”, whom he had met in Sicily, about the splendid painted vessels brought to light in Benghazi

⁵ It was only then, mostly upon French initiative, that an interest was taken in the Arabic accounts concerning North Africa. Numerous translations of Arabic geographic and historical works come from the mid-19th century – e.g. *Géographie d'Alboulféda*, ed. M. Reinaud (Paris 1848-1883); *al-Bekri, Description de l'Afrique septentrionale*, ed. W. De Slane (Paris 1859); *Voyage d'Ibn Batoutah*, ed. C. Defrémery – B.-R. Sanguinetti (Paris 1858); *Ibn Khaldun, Histoire des Berberes et des dynasties musulmans de l'Afrique Septentrionale I-IV* (Paris 1852-1856).

⁶ Muhammad al-Idrisi, *Geographia Nubiensis, id est accuratissima totius orbis in septem climata divisi descriptio* (texte imprimé), *continens praesertim exactam universae Asiae et Africae... explicationem, recens ex arabico in latinum versa a Gabriele Sionita, ... et Joanne Hesronita, ... De nonnullis orientalium urbibus, nec non indigenarum religione ac moribus tractatus brevis a Gabr. Sionita, ... ac Joanne Hesronita, ... nubiensi geographiae adjunctus* (Parisiis 1619).

⁷ Leo Africanus, *Descrizione dell'Africa e delle cose nobili che ivi sono* (Roma 1550).

⁸ H. Omont, *Missions archéologiques françaises en Orient aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles I* (Paris 1902) 309-314.

⁹ A. Lane, *The ruins at Virginia Waters* (part 1), *LibSt* 35, 2004, 67-94.

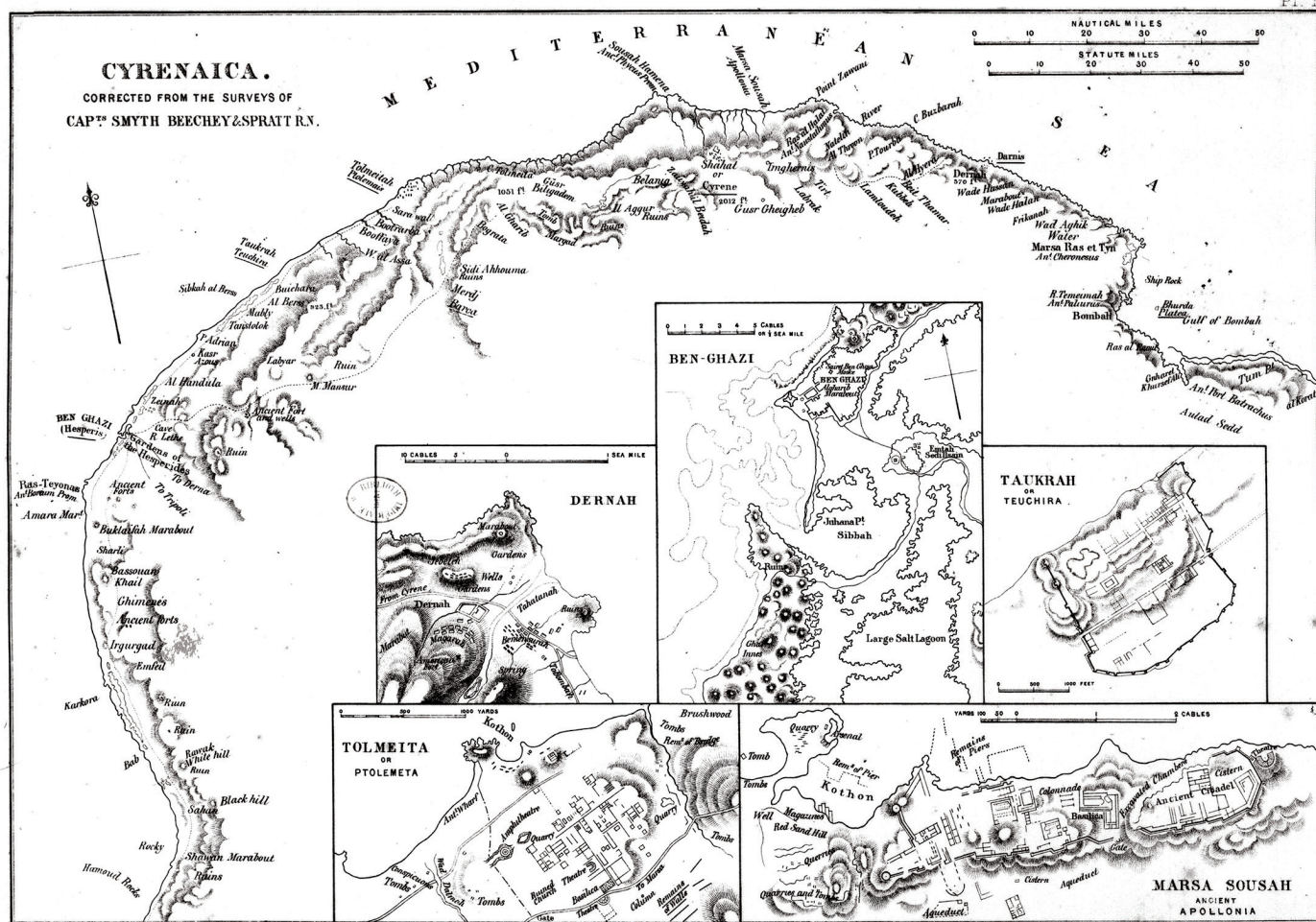
¹⁰ On travellers to Cyrenaica who took an interest in antiquities – cf. F. B. Goddard, *Researches in the Cyrenaica*, *AJPh* 5, 1884, 31-53; R.G. Goodchild, *A hole in Haevens*, ed. J. Reynolds (London 1976) 271-341; S. Bono, *Storiografia e fonti occidentali sulla Libia (1510-1911)*, *Quaderni dell'Istituto Italiano di Cultura di Tripoli*, n.s. 2 (Roma 1982) 77-94; A. Di Vita, *La Libia nel ricordo dei viaggiatori e nell'esplorazione archaeologica dalla fine del mondo antico ad oggi: brevi note*, *Quad-ALibya* 13, 1983, 63-86. They are also mentioned (especially regarding their interest in epigraphic finds) by A. Laronde, *Cyrène et la Libye hellénistique. Libykai Historiai de l'époque républicaine au périclès d'Auguste*, *Études d'Antiquités Africaines* (Paris 1987) 17-22.

¹¹ Information on the lack of safety and threat of conflict with the local tribes appears practically in every account – cf. Bruce, Beechey brothers, Hamilton, Porcher and Smith, etc.

¹² In 1450, during the Arab rule the ancient name of the city, which over the centuries functioned in the corrupted form Bernike, was changed to Ben Ghazi from the name of the holy Muslim sage Sidi Ghazi, who had just died there. On early colonization at that place, cf. R.G. Goodchild, *Benghazi. The story of a city* (Benghazi 1962).



Pl. 1



■ fig. 1

Cyrenaica in 1861 (R.M. Smith – E.A. Porcher, *History of the recent discoveries at Cyrene...*, pl. 1)

and its vicinity¹³. This peculiar reputation of the city is confirmed in a letter of R.M. Smith to Charles Newton written in 1861¹⁴. Practically all travellers testify to the dynamic development of “the antiquarian market” in Benghazi.

Depending on the route (which was contingent on the aim and character of the journey), the travellers had the opportunity to visit various centres, although

it seems that Cyrene was invariably the main destination. From Benghazi the city could be reached by a land shortcut (the road through Barca), or a route that ran at least partly along the coast, passing through other seaside localities, namely the ancient cities of Tauchira and Ptolemais recommended by one of the travellers: “il y existe un grand nombre de cités détruites, dont à peine on peut distinguer les vestiges; mais que les villes qui pourraient intéresser un voyageur instruit, sont Tocora (Teuchris), Tolometa”¹⁵.

¹³ D. E. Rhodes, *Dennis of Etruria: the life of George Dennis* (London 1973) 83.

¹⁴ A letter of 14 September 1861 – cf. D. M. Thorn, *The four seasons of Cyrene. The excavations and explorations in 1861 of Lieutenants R. Murdoch Smith, R.E and Edwin A. Porcher, R.N.*, *Studia Archaeologica* 155 (Roma 2007) 140.

¹⁵ Note communiquée à M. Delaporte, par M. Michel Micheli de Livourne, *Rélations inédites de la Cyrénaïque*, in: *Recueil de voyages et de mémoires*, publié par la Société de Géographie II (Paris 1825) 31.



I. Ptolemais in early European research

Nearly all the authors who sojourned in Cyrenaica decided to take the road along the coast in order not to miss the abovementioned ancient cities. Thus, their itineraries also included Ptolemais, a city the beginnings of which could be traced back to the 6th century B.C., although it was known by the name it received in the Hellenistic period¹⁶.

A great majority of the visitors appreciated both the convenient location of Ptolemais and the picturesque ruins stretching out over many hectares (fig. 2). According to the words of one of them: [...] "Tolometa, à 2 jours de Bengaze et un jour de Tocora, conserve encore des restes de son ancienne splendeur"¹⁷. And another: "In fact, there is no place on the coast of Northern Africa, between Ptolometa and Tripoly, which can at all be compared with the former of these places, for beauty, convenience, and security of position"¹⁸.

Arabic descriptions of Ptolemais mainly focused on the city's medieval architecture and on the important role of its port in Cyrenaica's economy¹⁹. The first European observations on ancient Ptolemais were recorded in the 18th century. In the Spring of 1706 the French consul in Tripoli, Claude Lemaire, travelled to the mountains of Derna to purchase Arabian horses for the Count of Toulouse. On the way C. Lemaire visited the most important sites of Cyrenaica and left the first account of such a journey, which appeared in a volume

by Paul Lucas (1712) devoted to his travels in the East²⁰. He is known as the first European to leave a description of the antiquities of Cyrene. Unfortunately, even though Lemaire mentioned Ptolemais in his account, he did not visit the city himself, but most probably repeated the opinion of an Arab guide that this city lacked "splendid ruins". Travelling by boat, he may have seen the silhouettes of several monuments from the sea.

The first person to visit Ptolemais specifically with the intention of describing the preserved remains of ancient structures was a physician from Dijon known by the last name Granger (fig. 3). In years 1730-1732 he travelled through Egypt and in 1733 he journeyed to Tripoli and Cyrenaica, where he stayed for several months. Unfortunately, the journal with the account of his subsequent travels, rich in descriptions, plans and drawings, is lost. Preserved until modern times is only a fourteen-page account of his journey through eastern Cyrenaica and Marmarica²¹. It contains the first more elaborate testimony and detailed description of several monuments distinguished by the traveller, such as columns of the Rostra and underground cisterns, the Western Basilica, the Tauchira Gate, and tombs in the western quarry, including the Mausoleum²².

Englishman James Bruce²³ (1766) was, in turn, the first European to have both the knowledge and the equipment necessary to launch the first scientific expedition to the region. The official aim of his journey

¹⁶ On the history and topography of the city – cf. recently T. Mikocki *et alii*, Ptolemais. Archaeological Tourist Guide (Warsaw 2006), therein a detailed bibliography of the city (74-79); cf. also C.H. Kraeling, Ptolemais. City of the Libyan Pentapolis (Chicago 1962).

¹⁷ *Rélation succincte de la Pentapole Libyque*, par le Révérend Père Pacifique de Monte Cassiano, Préfet apostolique de la mission de la Sacrée Propagande à Tripoli de Barbarie, traduite de l'italien par M. Delaporte, Vice-Consul à Tanger, in: *Recueil de voyages...*, 28-31.

¹⁸ F.W. Beechey – H.W. Beechey, *Proceedings of the Northern Coast of Africa from Tripoly eastward in MDCCCXXI and MDCCCXXII* comprehending an account of the greater Syrtis and Cyrenaica and of the ancient cities composing the Pentapolis (London 1828) 361.

¹⁹ Al-Bekri, *Description de l'Afrique Septentrionale*, ed. W. De Slane (Alger 1913) 14-15; al-Idrisi, *Géographie*, ed. P.A. Jaubert I (1836) 295; Alboulfêda, *Géographie*, ed. J. Reinaud II. 1 (Paris 1883) 204.

²⁰ P. Lucas, *Voyage du sieur Paul Lucas fait par ordre du Roi dans la Grèce, l'Asie Mineure, la Macédoine et l'Afrique II* (Paris 1712) 110-134, 417: inscription from Cyrene (C. Lemaire). On C. Lemaire, cf. also H. Omont, *Missions archéologiques...* 312-338, also 1037-1050, where his account was published *in extenso*: Des observations que le sieur Claude Lemaire, consul de France au Royaume de Tripoly, a fait en voiant le long de la coste de Derne et du Golfe de la Sidre, en 1705 et 1706, et sur diverses relations qu'il a eu du Soudan, qui signifie país de Nègre.

²¹ *Observations sur les différents ports où l'on peut mouiller en parcourant la coste de Barbarie depuis Tripoli jusqu'à Alexandrie* servant à corriger la carte marine de Berthelot, par Granger 1735 – *Arch. Nat., Marine*, 3 JJ, 237 (quoted in A. Laronde, *Aspects méconnus du voyage de Granger en Cyrénaïque au XVIIIe siècle*, BAntFr 1990, 188).

²² A. Laronde, *Aspects méconnus...*, 185-199.

²³ D. Cumming, James Bruce in Libya, *LibSt* 1, 1969, 12-18.



■ **fig. 2**

Ptolemais – plan by Beechey, 1822 (F.W. Beechey – H.W. Beechey, Proceedings..., 339)



TRAVELLERS	Walls	Western Gate	Port	Bridge	Square of the Cisterns	Cisterns	Aqueducts	Headquarters of Dux	Basilica	Necropolis/ Mausoleum	Amphitheatre	Theatres
Granger 1734		x			x			x	x	x		
Bruce 1767	x				x							
Della Cella 1817	x	x			x	x				x		
Padre Pacifico 1818	x		x			x				x		
Beechey, Beechey 1821/2	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Pacho 1824/5		x	x		x	x	x	x		x		
Barth 1848	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x		x
Vattier de Bourville 1847/9								x		x		
Hamilton 1856	x	x			x	x		x	x	x	x	x
Porcher, Smith 1861	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x		
Dennis 1867	x	x			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Rohlf's 1868-1869				x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Camperio 1881			x		x	x				x		
Weld Blundell 1895	x				x			x	x			x
De Martino 1908		x			x					x		x
Checchi 1910	x	x			x	x		x		x	x	x
Halbherr 1911	x	x			x	x	x	x	x	x		x

to Libya was to record its Graeco-Roman antiquities, although the real reason was the search for a convenient shortcut to the Nile source (he eventually reached the source of the Blue Nile). His travel companion was the Italian draftsman Luigi Balugani. After visiting Tripoli and Leptis Magna the travellers went on to Cyrenaica. They began this part of their journey in Benghazi. From there Bruce and Balugani took the maritime route to Ptolemais where, soon after disembarking, they engaged in a conflict with the locals. The travellers had to flee already after a half hour's stay in the city. Practically the only fruit of this expedition is a drawing with the three columns of the Square of the Cisterns visible in the foreground, and another drawing recording architectural details: an architrave and capitals of Ionic columns²⁴. On the first of the drawings the background, which depicts a non-existent port and a rocky ridge, is a product of the author's imagination. Nevertheless, the precision in portraying the ancient architectural fragments gives

■ fig. 3

Tabular listing of visitors to Ptolemais and the monuments they mentioned (includes only the persons whose descriptions went beyond general statements)

this source documentary value, which is even greater because it shows the architrave supported by columns that were still standing in the 18th century, but have since then collapsed. Bruce's description of Ptolemais consists of a few casual remarks which indicate that in a rush he probably merged accounts of two neighbouring ancient cities: Tauchira and Ptolemais. This error must have been the reason why in the description of the latter he mentioned completely preserved walls and city gates (like the ones extant to date in Tauchira)²⁵. Further in the description there is mention of Greek inscriptions and columns, the remains of a portico of "an Ionic temple in the first manner of executing that order"²⁶.

²⁴ Currently the drawing is kept in the royal archives at the Windsor Castle. Visible in the background is a fragment of a cliff shoreline and the sea, which lies at a much greater distance from the abovementioned columns, several hundred metres to the north west, while the "gebel" in this area is 2-3 km from the coast, therefore these features do not agree with the real landscape. Also in disagreement with the truth is the placement of port structures in the background, which corresponds to what Bruce may have seen in Benghazi rather than in Ptolemais or even in Tauchira, cf. D. Cumming, James Bruce..., fig. 1.

²⁵ This statement was already considered erroneous by P. Della Cella, *Viaggio da Tripoli di Barberia alle frontiere occidentali dell'Egitto* (Genova 1819) 131; such an opinion became widespread among subsequent travellers and scholars, although D. Roques clearly opposes it – cf. note 116.

²⁶ J. Bruce, *Travels to discover the sources of Nile in the years 1768, 1769, 1770, 1771, 1772 & 1773 I* (Edinburgh – London 1790) 40-41. J. Bruce interpreted the columns standing in the northern part of the Square of the Cisterns as a part of an Ionic temple; cf. *infra*.



It was not until the beginning of the 19th century that the number of travellers through Cyrenaica increased. The intensification of travel was associated, among others, with the establishment of major geographic societies, which promoted the exploration of North and Central Africa. In France the first project to create such an association was born as early as 1785, but it was not carried out until 1821²⁷. Similar organisations were established in 1828 in Germany²⁸, and in 1830 in Great Britain²⁹. This increase in traffic was possible thanks to a greater opening of the entire country to foreigners during the reign of the last rulers of the Karamanli dynasty³⁰. However, despite persisting efforts to penetrate this area, independent expeditions were rare. Much more common were journeys of individuals – doctors, soldiers or clergymen, who accompanied military expeditions launched by the authorities in Tripoli to Cyrenaica, i.a. in order to “persuade” the local tribes to pay taxes.

An Italian doctor from Pisa, Agostino Cervelli, travelled to Cyrenaica with a punitive expedition dispatched by a pasha of the Karamanli dynasty in 1811–1812. The fruit of this expedition was a journal kept throughout the journey, which took him along the coastline all the way to Derna. The original journal is lost, but an abridged French version of the account was published in 1825 by Delaporte, deputy consul of France in Tanger³¹. However, this summarised version lacks information on the antiquities of Ptolemais, although mentions on Cyrene (supplemented with three plates that comprised

over a dozen drawings documenting ancient monuments), Barca and other cities testify to the author’s “archaeological” interests.

Cervelli’s successor was a young physician and botanist Paolo Della Cella (from Genova)³², who assisted another military expedition sent to Cyrenaica in 1817. His account is concise, but not without value. The traveller copied inscriptions, registered finds he saw in collections (including antiquities in possession of the English deputy consul in Benghazi), and described ruins³³. He also visited Ptolemais, the monuments of which astonished him. He admired not only the size and splendour of the city, but also the individual monuments, among which he was particularly impressed by the Mausoleum (so-called the Tower Tomb), the Great Cistern and the Rostra with relics of a mosaic and standing columns. Although his efforts were commendable, he lacked the time and education needed to produce an in-depth study of the region. Nevertheless, the value of his account was recognised: it was immediately translated into foreign languages³⁴ and republished during the first years of Italian occupation. Della Cella himself was considered the pioneer of documentation works in Cyrene and other cities of the region.

Another traveller, Padre Pacifico da Monte Cassiano, arrived to Tripoli on an apostolic mission “di propaganda fide” in 1819 and travelled from there to Cyrenaica. He left an account of this journey, later conveyed by

²⁷ E.-F. Jomard, Note sur une Société de Géographie projetée à Paris en 1785, *Bulletin de la Société de géographie* 1 (2e série), no. 1-6, 1834, 409–415.

²⁸ K. Lenz, The Berlin Geographical Society 1828–1978, *The Geographical Journal* 144, 1978, 218–223.

²⁹ Etablissement d’une Société géographique en Angleterre, *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie* 14, nos. 87–92, 1830, 35–39.

³⁰ The Karamanli dynasty ruled Libya for 124 years, after their emancipation from the rule of Constantinople in 1711. The founder of the dynasty was Ahmed Karamanli, a son of an Ottoman army officer and a woman of a local tribe. One of the rulers, Yusuf Karamanli, tried to save the economy of the state by radically raising taxes and dispatched punitive expeditions to enforce them.

³¹ Extrait du Journal d’une expédition faite en 1811 et 1812, de Tripoli à Derne, par les déserts, tenu par M. Augustin Cervelli, médecin, natif de Pise en Toscane, rédigé par M. Delaporte, Vice-Consul de France à Tanger, in: *Recueil de voyages...*, 15–27.

³² On P. Della Cella, cf. La vita e l’opera del dottore Paolo Della Cella, in: P. Della Cella, *Viaggio da Tripoli di Barberia alle frontiere occidentali dell’Egitto fatto nel 1817* ²(Città di Castello 1912) I–XVII.

³³ P. Della Cella, *Viaggio da Tripoli...*, *passim*.

³⁴ In 1821 the German version appeared, in 1822 – the English and French versions. Another French version was published in a new translation in 1840 by Adolph Pezant (*Voyage en Afrique au Royaume de Barkah et dans la Cyrénaïque à travers le désert*). This version included numerous notes of the translator and his postface, which is probably a reminiscence of his own travel to North Africa. In the chapter *Notice sur la Cyrénaïque moderne ou Royaume de Barkah* (323–339) the author summarises the state of knowledge on Cyrenaica and describes the ancient cities of Cyrene, Derna, Benghazi, Barca, Tauchira and Ptolemais. In the description of Ptolemais he mentions Roman barracks (caserne) and the Edict of Anastasius, the Great Cistern, columns on the Rostra (he thinks them to be remains of a temple), the gate and the cemetery, but his contribution does not include any new observations.



Delaporte³⁵. Several pages of descriptions show that he was interested in the monuments of the ancient cities he travelled through – Cyrene, Apollonia, Ptolemais, Tauchira, and Berenice. In the few sentences devoted to Ptolemais he listed the most important monuments of the city: the Great Cistern, “two mausolea” (misidentified gate), columns and mosaics, as well as a “square tower” (as he calls an unidentified mausoleum on the western necropolis). Although in comparison to his predecessors his account does not convey any new information, it constitutes another testimony for the growing interest in the region’s antiquities.

The journey of brothers Henry and Frederick Beechey, the former an officer of the Royal Navy and the latter a painter, gave a new edge to field surveying and research works. Their voyage (1821-1822) was part of a larger project of the British Admiralty to make detailed plans of the coastline, a task the brothers took great pains to carry out³⁶. Thanks to the support of British Consul Hamner Warrington, pasha Yusuf Karamanli who then ruled Libya gave them a convoy, which helped them safely travel along the planned route. Clad in Arab dress, they systematically made their way along the coastline through the whole Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, drawing exceptional plans of cities of the Pentapolis³⁷ that remain valid sources of information to date. The value of their account is owed to drawings that record the state of knowledge on the cities of ancient Cyrenaica. The text, thanks to the ambition and conscientiousness of the authors, is a source of relevant information until today³⁸. They also visited Ptolemais, whose location de-

lighted them³⁹. Although the brothers drafted a detailed plan⁴⁰, which was the effect of several days of survey work, they repeatedly declared the need for archaeological investigation in order to determine the function of individual buildings, their plan and dating, as “very little satisfactory information can be obtained of their plan without a good deal of labour in clearing them from the accumulation of soil and the fragments of fallen building, with which they are encumbered”⁴¹. Plotted on the plan were the most important buildings in the city – the Square of the Cisterns, the amphitheatre, two theatres (recorded for the first time in Ptolemais), relics of other buildings they had not identified – as well as beyond its limits (the eastern and western necropoleis along with the Mausoleum). They conducted a pioneering investigation of the ramparts, going beyond a description of the Tauchira Gate and carefully verifying the course of the city walls in the field. They were also the first to solve the mystery of the city’s water supply with their study of its cisterns and aqueducts (both in the city and beyond).

Research conducted by the Beechey brothers was to some extent supplemented by the almost simultaneously published travel account of Jean-Raimond Pacho (1794-1829), who like them is one of the true pioneer of research in Cyrenaica. He set out on his journey in November 1824 under the auspices of Société de Géographie in Paris. The expedition, which included several members (including the arabist Müller), was well prepared in terms of knowledge and properly equipped with archaeological exploration tools. Pacho investigated all the cities of Cyrenaica, leaving one of the best and most in-depth testimonies of the ruins of Cyrene predating the launch of systematic excavation works on this site. During the course of the expedition

³⁵ Cf. note 17.

³⁶ The survey was conducted simultaneously with the maritime campaign of Captain W. H. Smyth, an officer of the Royal Navy.

³⁷ Including plans of cities such as Benghazi, Tauchira, Ptolemais, Cyrene, Derna, Apollonia.

³⁸ On the Beechey brothers, cf. J.C. Thorn – D.M. Thorn, The Beechey brothers, their life and times, in: M. Luni (ed.), *Cirene e la Cirenaica nell’antichità* (Roma 2010) 235-247; F.W. Beechey – H.W. Beechey, *Proceedings...*. Only a part of the drawings made during the journey (depicting the ruins of the Western Basilica, the Square of the Cisterns with three columns, the western necropolis, and the bridge) were published in the account in the form of illustrations. Some of the other ones were found in the British Museum collections – British Museum, Dep. Greek and Roman Antiquities, Bailey Draw-

ings 2-5; cf. recently J. C. Thorn, Drawings by Beechey in the Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities, British Museum, in: E. Fabbricotti – O. Menozzi (ed.), *Cirenaica: studi, scavi e scoperte. Parte I: Nuovi dati da città e territorio*, Atti del X Convegno di Archeologia Cirenaica, BAR IntSer 1488 (Roma 2006) 289-293, pl. 2-6.

³⁹ F.W. Beechey – H.W. Beechey, *Proceedings...*, 361.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, 339, plate before chapter XII.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, 383.



he sent detailed progress reports to Paris⁴² and after returning to France he prepared a publication in two volumes. One was an album of 100 plates that became the best source of information on this region for over 150 years⁴³. The contemporary works of J.-R. Pacho and the Beechey brothers complement one another. The Beechey brothers conducted an excellent topographical survey in Cyrenaica, while the drawings of Pacho, who recorded individual monuments, are more detailed⁴⁴. Found in Pacho's account are not only descriptions of the main landmarks of Ptolemais⁴⁵, but also several plates recording architectural features and inscriptions at the entrances to tombs⁴⁶. One of the most important pieces of information that reached Europe through this author was a mention, supplemented with a facsimile, of the Edict of Anastasius from 501, carved on the façade of the so-called Headquarters of the Dux. The inscription sparked great interest in European scientific milieus, especially in France⁴⁷, which culminated a quarter of a century later with the transport of the inscribed plaques to Paris (cf. *infra*).

The end of the rule of the Karamanli dynasty (1835) and the re-gaining of power by a representative of the Sultan from Constantinople temporarily brought the exploration of Cyrenaica to a halt. Travel was possible again only after the political situation had

been stabilised. The mid-19th century brought more archaeological investigation in Cyrenaica, which was, nevertheless, sporadic before the 20th century and focused on the pillaging of objects of greater value rather than on their registration and systematic investigation. The most frequent mentions of such activity concern Cyrene and Benghazi, a city that was a base for diplomatic representatives of the European powers which had a particular interest in collecting antiquities – Great Britain and France. The first diplomat to obtain the local governor's permit to conduct excavations in Cyrene and other cities, including Ptolemais, was Joseph Vattier de Bourville, the French consul in Benghazi⁴⁸. During excursions made to the cities of Cyrenaica during his term in office in years 1848-1850⁴⁹ he also launched excavation works in order to obtain artefacts for the Louvre and Cabinet des Médailles⁵⁰. The yield of his endeavours, which filled a dozen or so chests, was sent to Paris in years 1850-1852⁵¹. Currently this collection of sculptures, inscriptions, terracotta figurines and numismatic finds is housed in the Louvre⁵². Vattier de Bourville's methods of acquiring antiquities were severely criticised already by his contemporaries. Among his acquisitions were the three stone blocks with the

⁴² Among the most important are: Lettre de Jean Raymond Pacho à M. Jomard 3 août 1825, Bulletin de la Société de Géographie 4, juillet-décembre, no. 27-32, 1825, 174-176; Jomard lit deux lettres de M. Pacho, *ibidem*, 234, 370-371; Voyage de M. Pacho dans la Cyrénaïque, Nouvelles Annales des voyages, de la géographie et de l'histoire 28, 1825, 140-141.

⁴³ The account was immediately received with enthusiasm – cf. Alex Barbié du Bocage, Rapport sur la "Rélation d'un voyage dans la Marmarique", Bulletin de la Société de la Géographie 8, juillet-décembre, no. 51-56, 1827, 200-211, 249-267.

⁴⁴ Relation d'un voyage dans la Marmarique, la Cyrenaïque et les oasis d'Aujelah et de Maradèh accompagnée de cartes géographiques et topographiques et de planches représentant les monuments de ces contrées par M. J. R. Pacho. Ouvrage publié sous les auspices de J. E. Le Ministre de l'Intérieur. Dédié au Roi I-II (Paris 1827).

⁴⁵ J.-R. Pacho, Relation d'un voyage dans la Marmarique..., 178-182.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, pl. 59, 1-2; 68; 70-77; 79; 79 (*sic*). All facsimiles were later published in the third volume of CIG.

⁴⁷ J.-A. Letronne, Sur quelques inscriptions inédites trouvées dans la Cyrénaïque par M. Pacho, JSav, mars 1828, 183-188.

⁴⁸ T. Serres-Jacquart, Joseph Vattier de Bourville (1812-1854). Notes sur un explorateur de la Cyrénaïque, JSav, 2001, 2ème partie, 393-429; cf. also J. Vattier de Bourville, Coup d'oeil sur la Cyrénaïque ancienne et moderne (s.l.a.); Rapport adressé à M. le Ministre de l'Instruction publique et des cultes, par M. J. Vattier de Bourville, Bengasi, 27 mars 1848. [Inscriptions trouvées aux ruines de Cyrène.] = Extrait des Archives des missions scientifiques, 1ère série I (Paris 1850).

⁴⁹ Lettre de M. Vattier de Bourville à M. Letronne sur les premiers résultats de son voyage à Cyrène, RA 5, 1848, 150-154, 433 sq.; Letronne, Quelques notes sur la lettre de M. de Bourville, relative à l'exploration de la Cyrenique, RA 5, 1848, 279-281.

⁵⁰ Extrait d'une lettre de M. Vattier de Bourville, agent consulaire à Benghazi, adressée à M. Jomard, Bulletin de la Société de Géographie de la France, 1848, no. 10, juillet-décembre, 172-180.

⁵¹ T. Serres-Jacquart, Récolement des marbres envoyés par Vattier de Bourville en 1852, JSav 2004, 1ère partie, 124-126.

⁵² At the Département des Antiquités Grecques, Etrusques et Romaines – e.g. MN 1534 (Antinous from Cyrene), MN 1538 (female funerary portrait from Cyrene), terracotta figurines - MI 34, MN 563, MN 557, MN 928, MN 561, MN 560, MN 950, MN 936, MN 618, decorated vases, among them one from Ptolemais (MN 64).



so-called Edict of Anastasius (now in the Louvre)⁵³. Such a way of obtaining artefacts was assessed as vandalism by Englishman James Hamilton⁵⁴ and German Gerhard Rohlfs⁵⁵, who strongly disapproved of the devastation of the Late-Antique Headquarters of the Dux, from which Vattier de Bourville had “collected” the inscription.

Another traveller was the famous German researcher, archaeologist, philologist and geographer Heinrich Barth, who, having finished his studies in Berlin, set out on a tour of North Africa⁵⁶. He began his investigation of the continent in Tanger, from where he travelled along the coastline to Egypt. Having ventured up the Nile, he continued across the Sinai to Palestine, Syria, Asia Minor, Turkey and Greece, to return to Berlin in 1847. During his long journey he wrote an account in which he meticulously recorded the history of the ancient cities and their monuments⁵⁷. H. Barth also visited Ptolemais where he thoroughly investigated the entire city as well as the surrounding necropoleis making use of ancient sources and works of predecessors, including Arab geographers. As he repeatedly points out, he was the first to consistently and extensively use Arab sources⁵⁸. He penned descriptions of the Mausoleum, the relics of coastal buildings, the Square of the Cisterns and the giant reservoir found underneath, the “barracks”, the gate (identified as two bastions), and he mentioned a theatre.

He also traced the course of the city walls (following indications in the account left by the Beechey brothers) and recorded random inscriptions⁵⁹.

In the mid-19th century Cyrenaica was visited by Englishman James Hamilton who, though he could not resist digging test trenches in places of particular interest to him, preferred sightseeing and recording impressions to collecting antiquities. He was long regarded as the first tourist in this region⁶⁰, although according to the most recent data he rather posed as one and was in fact a secret agent⁶¹. During his travels through Cyrenaica he also visited Ptolemais by which, however, he was not impressed (he even admitted that it was smaller than he had expected), though he did see a lot of ancient architecture on site – the Tauchira Gate, fragments of walls, necropoleis, one of the theatres, the amphitheatre, the bridge, the aqueduct, etc.⁶².

In 1860 and 1861 Captain Robert Murdoch Smith and Commander Edwin Augustin Porcher arrived to Cyrenaica on a special mission financed by the British government⁶³. The main aim of their expedition was archaeological exploration of Cyrene, where they spent over a year⁶⁴ (and from where they sent i.a. 148 sculptures and their fragments and 33 inscriptions to the British Museum)⁶⁵. They also made excursions in the area, visiting Apollonia, Tauchira, as well as Ptolemais. The trip to Ptolemais yielded several pages of descriptions of the ruins and some plates depicting the city's

⁵³ CIG III 5187.

⁵⁴ J. Hamilton, *Wanderings in North Africa* (London 1856) 143.

⁵⁵ G. Rohlfs, *Von Tripoli nach Alexandrien. Beschreibung der im Auftrage Sc. Majestät des Königs von Preussen in den Jahren 1868 und 1869 ausgeführten Reise* (Bremen 1871) 161.

⁵⁶ *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* II (1875) 96-99 s.v. Barth, Heinrich (J. Löwenberg); P. Kremer, *Africanus. Leben und Reisen des Afrikaforschers Heinrich Barth* (Düren 2007). H. Barth is better known as a renowned explorer of the Sahara, through which he travelled during another one of his stays in Africa – cf. *Reisen und Entdeckungen in Nord- und Centralafrika* I-V (Gotha 1855-1858). On his interest in epigraphy cf. recently A. Łajtar – J. van der Vliet, CIG IV, 8952 revisited (“Gebel Maktub” near Qasr Ibrim, Nubia), in press (I am grateful to the authors for showing me this text before publication).

⁵⁷ H. Barth, *Wanderungen durch die Küstenländer des Mittelmeeres* (Berlin 1849).

⁵⁸ E.g. al-Idrisi – cf. H. Barth, *Wanderungen...*, 399, footnote 44.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, 396-402.

⁶⁰ J. Hamilton, *Wanderings...*, 3.

⁶¹ G.R.H. Wright, James Hamilton in Tripoli, 1855-1856: the strange sequel to “Wanderings in North Africa”, *LibSt* 37, 2006, 57-70; *Idem*, James Hamilton's *Wanderings* (1852-1856). Mission and misadventure, in: M. Luni (ed.), *Cirene e la Cirenaica...*, 249-257.

⁶² J. Hamilton, *Wanderings...*, 139-145.

⁶³ D. M. Thorn, *The four seasons...*, 13-17.

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, *passim*.

⁶⁵ J. C. Thorn, *Explorers of Cyrene 1822-1894*, in: E. Catani – S.M. Marengo (ed.), *Cirene in età antica*, *Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi*, Macerata 18-20.05.1995 (Pisa-Roma 1998) 559-571; M. Luni, *La scoperta della città di Cirene “Atene d’Africa”*, in: M. Luni (ed.), *Cirene “Atene d’Africa”*, *Monografie di Archeologia Libica* 28 (Roma 2006) 29-31.



monuments⁶⁶. During their two-day stay in the city the Englishmen carefully investigated the site and located most of the monuments mentioned by the Beechey brothers, whose publication they used as a guide⁶⁷. Porcher and Smith described the Tauchira Gate and the Square of the Cisterns, mentioned the aqueduct and the cisterns found throughout the city, and visited the western necropolis, where they devoted particular attention to the Mausoleum. As it appears from Porcher's letter to Charles Newton (dated 23 March 1861), the researchers deliberately refrained from launching excavations in the city "leaving [it] to some future explorers", as they did not expect to find any spectacular artefacts⁶⁸. 20th-century investigations proved how wrong they were in this respect.

We know relatively little about the impressions of later explorers and travellers. Among the visitors to Cyrenaica was George Dennis (1864-1868)⁶⁹. Since 1863 he also excavated in Sicily and from there he travelled to Cyrenaica, where he took up the post of deputy consul in Benghazi. G. Dennis engaged in archaeological exploration upon request of the authorities of the British Museum, which was in need of small objects (other than sculptures). He stated the aim of his investigations in a letter of 1863: "to explore the cities and cemeteries of the Cyrenaica, with the view of enriching the national Museum"⁷⁰. He conducted fieldwork in Greek necropoleis – respectively in Cyrene, Apollonia, Benghazi, Tauchira, and Ptolemais. These investigations yielded numerous small finds subsequently sent to the British

Museum⁷¹. He published the results of his work – the field survey and excavations – in 1870⁷². Among the published information he included data on the topography of Ptolemais, especially of the necropoleis (free-standing tombs and rock-cut graves), but also mentioned "two theatres, several temples, barracks, baths, large vaulted reservoirs, isolated forts, and Christian churches, [...] three Ionic columns"⁷³. As he was primarily interested in Greek remains, the visible monuments of Ptolemais (mostly Roman) did not impress him.

The next traveller was Gerhard Rohlfs, an envoy of the King of Prussia⁷⁴, who in 1868 traversed the entire coast of Cyrenaica on the way from Benghazi to Cyrene, minutely registering the monuments he saw en route⁷⁵. Like his compatriot, the aforementioned H. Barth, G. Rohlfs was very well prepared for the journey and when sightseeing he often referred to the information conveyed by his predecessor. He described the Christian church (which he dated to the 2nd – 3rd century A.D.[!]), the amphitheatre, the Square of the Cisterns, two theatres, the Headquarters of the Dux, and the western necropolis with the Mausoleum. G. Rohlfs was also interested in the city's water supply – he searched for cisterns and remains of aqueducts⁷⁶.

The end of the 19th century brought another interlude in Cyrenaican travels. The uncertain political situation persuaded the authorities in Constantinople to stop any attempts at exploring the region, believing them to be cover-ups for political activity and efforts to gain economic domination. From the 1880s onwards

⁶⁶ History of the recent discoveries at Cyrene made during an expedition to the Cyrenaica in 1860-1861 under the auspices of her majesty's government by captain R. Murdoch Smith, R.E. and commander E.A. Porcher, R.N. (London 1864) 65-67, pl. 50-54; cf. also recently D. M. Thorn, *The four seasons...*, 69-71.

⁶⁷ R.M. Smith – E.A. Porcher, *History of the recent discoveries at Cyrene...*, 66.

⁶⁸ D.M. Thorn, *The four seasons...*, 66.

⁶⁹ Renowned especially for his research on Etruscan culture, the author of "The Cities and Cemeteries of Etruria" (1848), a publication highly regarded in the academic milieu for the entire century that followed; cf. also D. E. Rhodes, *Dennis of Etruria...*

⁷⁰ J. C. Thorn, *Rowe's Cyrenaican expeditions I* (Manchester 2001) 18-19.

⁷¹ There are registered finds from Ptolemais at the British Museum (Greek and Roman Department) Register of Acquisitions: 1867.05.12.25, 1867.05.12.34-35. A lack of more exact information on the provenance of the finds which Dennis had sent to the British Museum in years 1866, 1868, 1869 does not permit to distinguish which are from Tauchira, Benghazi or Ptolemais.

⁷² G. Dennis, *On recent excavations in the Greek cemeteries of the Cyrenaica*, Transactions Royal Society Literature of the United Kingdom, Second Series 9, 1870, 135-182.

⁷³ *Ibidem*, 151-156.

⁷⁴ H. Gnettner, *Der Bremer Afrikaforscher Gerhard Rohlfs. Vom Aussteiger zum Generalkonsul. Eine Biographie* (Bremen 2005).

⁷⁵ G. Rohlfs, *Von Tripolis nach Alexandrien...*

⁷⁶ *Ibidem*, 158-164.



Cyrenaica was visited primarily by Italians⁷⁷, among whom were several figures distinguished by their interest in antiquities. One group included geographers, artists and economists and another – archaeologists who conducted preliminary survey works before launching excavations. In 1881 an expedition to Cyrenaica was organised under the auspices of Milan's "Società di esplorazione commerciale in Africa" by Captain Manfredo Camperio⁷⁸ and Giuseppe Haimann⁷⁹ (only the former visited Ptolemais). In 1905 Banco di Roma advertised travel to Libya, encouraging Senator Giacomo di Martino to journey to Cyrenaica (Derna and the Gebel Akhdar region). The effects of both of these voyages were accounts in which the authors wrote many words of praise for the monuments of the cities they visited, including Ptolemais⁸⁰. True explorers who conducted their survey based on professional research were Federico Halbherr and Gaetano De Sanctis⁸¹. Thanks to their accounts we know the state of preservation of ruins within the city and beyond its walls before the Italian

occupation and the military campaigns. Despite the aforementioned difficulties, at the end of the 19th and in the early 20th century Cyrenaica was also visited by scarce European and American globetrotters, journalists and scholars interested in antiquities, among them David G. Hogarth⁸², Director of the British School at Athens, another English archaeologist and traveller Herbert Weld-Blundell⁸³, French journalist Henri Méhier de Mathuisieulx⁸⁴, and American archaeologists⁸⁵ whose list is headed by Richard Norton of the American Institute of Archaeology, future director of excavations at Cyrene⁸⁶.

In 1908 a British expedition to Cyrenaica was organised under the auspices of the Jewish Territorial Organisation intending to find a new homeland for victimised Eastern-European Jews. Members of the expedition were scientists of various disciplines who were to assess the geographic and economic conditions in the region⁸⁷. An additional result of this visit was the account of J.W. Gregory (geologist), in which the author, who was "deeply interested in classical remains", minutely described the visited ancient cities including Cyrene, Apollonia, and Messa, but devoted only one sentence to Ptolemais⁸⁸.

⁷⁷ M.-H. Larfaoui, *L'occupation italienne de la Libye 1882-1911* (Paris 2010) 137-154.

⁷⁸ *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani XVII* (1974) s.v. Camperio Manfredo (M. Carazzi).

⁷⁹ G. Haimann, *Cirenaica*, Bolletino della Società Geographica Italiana 7, 1882, 6-8, 92-121, 248-269, 313-340; later also published in book form G. Haimann, *Cirenaica* (Roma 1882). For the author, cf. F. Solmi, Giuseppe Haimann (Casalecchio di Reno 1986).

⁸⁰ G. De Martino, *Cirene e Cartagine* (Bologna 1908) 79-83 (including 3 photographs of Ptolemais monuments: mausoleum, porta principale, tempio).

⁸¹ On Federico Halbherr, cf. V. La Rosa (ed.), *La figura e l'opera di Federico Halbherr*, Atti del Convegno di Studio, 26-27 maggio 2000 Rovereto (Padova 2000); A. Della Seta, Federico Halbherr, *ASAtene* 13-14, 1930-1931, 1-8; V. La Rosa, Federico Halbherr e Creta, in: V. La Rosa (ed.), *L'archeologia italiana nel Mediterraneo fino alla Seconda Guerra Mondiale*, Atti del convegno di studi, Catania 4-5 novembre 1985 (Catania 1986) 53-72; M. Petricoli, Federico Halbherr fra archeologia e politica, in: V. La Rosa (ed.), *La figura...*, 100-112 (especially 106-111); S. Accame, F. Halbherr e G. De Sanctis, pionieri delle Missioni Archeologiche Italiane a Creta e in Cirenaica (dal carteggio De Sanctis 1909-1932), Studi pubblicati dall'Istituto Italiano per la storia antica, fasc. 34 (Roma 1984); S. Accame, F. Halbherr e G. De Sanctis (nuove lettere dal carteggio De Sanctis (1892-1932)) (Roma 1986); journey to Cyrenaica – S. Aurigemma, Federico Halbherr e la Missione archeologica italiana in Cirenaica e in Tripolitania, *Africa Italiana* 3, 1930, 237-250; G. Oliverio, Federico Halbherr in Cirenaica (Luglio 1910-Aprile 1911), *Africa Italiana* 4, 1931, 229-290.

⁸² D. G. Hogarth, *Cyrenaica*, Monthly review 18, 1905, 90-106; cf. also A. H. Sayce, David George Hogarth 1862-1927, *Proceedings of the British Academy* 13, 1927, 379-384.

⁸³ D. M. Bailey, *Photographs of Libya*, 2, LibSt 27, 1996, 67-70; H. Weld-Blundell, *A visit to Cyrene in 1895*, BSA 2, 1906, 113-140; *Idem*, Report: Cyrenaica, 1894-5, Archive of BM Orig. Papers and Letters, 10.01.1896.

⁸⁴ H. Méhier de Mathuisieulx, *La Cyrénaïque*, Tour de monde 15-16, 1907, 169-192.

⁸⁵ J. P. Uhlenbrock, *Cyrene papers: the second report*. The Oric Bates expedition of 1909, LibSt 30, 1999, 77-97; F. B. Goddard, *Researches...*, 31-53; cf. also O. Bates, *The eastern Libyans*. An essay (London 1914).

⁸⁶ A description of the journey across Cyrenaica – R. Norton, From Bengazi to Cyrene, *Bulletin of the Archaeological Institute of America* 2, 1911, 57-67, pl. 1-6.

⁸⁷ The written report (J.W. Gregory – M. B. Duff – I. Zangwill – M.D. Eder – N. Slousch, Report of the Commission of the Jewish Territorial Organisation for the Purpose of a Jewish Settlement in Cyrenaica, London 1909) was critical about the natural environment (especially the lack of water), at the same time emphasising the xenophobia of the Arabs inhabiting this region.

⁸⁸ J. W. Gregory, *Cyrenaica*, *The Geographical Journal* 47, 1916, 330.



Unfortunately, with the rise of international tensions at the beginning of the 20th century the Sublime Porte put an end to further exploration attempts in Cyrenaica, rightly fearing that they were only a disguise for expansionist aspirations. A new phase of research began after 1912, when in accordance with the Treaty of Lausanne Libya was handed over to Italy, which controlled Cyrenaica for the next 30 years. Italian rule began a new era in the study of Cyrenaica, which had to do with the intensification of travel⁸⁹, as well as launching of new research projects⁹⁰. The first plans and proposals of specific works were owed to Federico Halbherr⁹¹, who intended to direct a joint mission in Crete and Cyrenaica. In 1910 the first Italian expedition in Cyrenaica, having conducted a preliminary survey of the area, decided to begin systematic excavations in Cyrene and classified two other sites, Ptolemais and Tauchira, as very promising⁹². However, due to an unstable political situation in the region (guerrillas led by Omar Mukhtar caused constant unrest) regular excavations in Ptolemais were launched much later and the

city's monuments not only remained unstudied, but suffered from damage inflicted by Italian soldiers stationed there. Stone blocks from ancient structures were used for building Italian forts and monuments such as the Tauchira Gate were "adorned" with inscriptions. Although the first investigations began already in 1910⁹³, they did not gain momentum until 1935-1942, when Giacomo Caputo was director⁹⁴. In this period numerous excavation and conservation works were conducted in cooperation with Enrico Paribeni and Gennaro Pesce. Test trenches were excavated along selected sections of city walls, especially at the Tauchira Gate, which was then unearthed completely. Comprehensive excavation works were conducted along the Via Monumentale⁹⁵. Excavations and conservation works were also performed at the Western Basilica⁹⁶ and the Mausoleum beyond the city limits. Investigated and partly reconstructed was also Palazzo delle Colonne (works directed by Gennaro Pesce)⁹⁷. "Clearances and soundings" were done at the amphitheatre, the Odeon, and the Upper Theatre⁹⁸. This period also saw the building of the first museum storeroom for the finds, open to visitors. In years 1956-57 Italians in cooperation with the Libyan

⁸⁹ The travellers were Italians (e.g. Luigi Ciavoli-Cortelli, *La Cirenaica. Impressioni e note di un escursionista* (Aquila 1920); Socrate Checchi, *Attraverso la Cirenaica* (Roma 1912) on Ptolemais – 107-118, 7 photographs) as well as representatives of other nations (e.g. L. Bertrand, *Vers Cyrène terre d'Apollon* (Paris 1935); M. Berenson, *A Vicarious trip to the barbary coast* (London 1938) on Ptolemais – 46-48, 71-73) including Poles – R. Fajans, *Wskreszone dzieło Cezarów* (Warszawa 1935); K. Nowak, *Rowerem i pieszo przez Czarny Łąd. Listy z podróży afrykańskiej z lat 1931-1936* (Poznań 2007) – cf. especially the chapter "Wybrzeżem Cyrenajki", 30-35). Because of the Italian policy of promoting "mass tourism", the Italian Automobile Club began to publish tourist guides about Libya (A. Fantoli, *Libya. Cyrenaica*, Touring Club Italiano (Milano 1923); *Libia, Guida d'Italia del Touring Club Italiano* (Milano 1929); L. V. Betrarelli, *Libia, Guida d'Italia del Touring Club Italiano* (Milano 1937) 375-379 (on Ptolemais).

⁹⁰ Cf. i.a. A. Ghisleri, *Tripolitania e Cirenaica dal Mediterraneo al Sahara. Monografia storico-geografica* (Milano – Bergamo 1912); A. Mori, *Rassegne bibliografiche per il periodo anteriore all'occupazione Italiana*, in: *Archivio Bibliographico Coloniale (Libia)*, Società Italiana per lo studio della Libia e delle altre colonie (Firenze 1915) 1-15, 85-96; (Firenze 1916) 1-19, 69-81, 139-152.

⁹¹ A. de Vita, *Tripolitania e Cirenaica nel carteggio Halbherr: fra politica e archeologia*, in: V. La Rosa (ed.), *L'archeologia italiana...*, 73-92.

⁹² G. Oliverio, *Federico Halbherr in Cirenaica...*, 252-260, fig. 22-32.

⁹³ E. Ghislanzoni, *Notizie archeologiche sulla Cirenaica*, *Notiziario archeologico* 1, 1915, 114-154. From the numerous works on colonial archaeology a few should be singled out – cf. S. Altenkamp, *Italian Colonial Archaeology in Libya 1912-1942*, in: L. Galaty – Ch. Watkinson (ed.), *Archaeology under dictatorship* (New York 2004) 55-71; *Idem*, *Rückkehr nach Africa, Arbeiten zur Archäologie* (Böhlau – Köln 2000).

⁹⁴ G. Caputo, *La protezione dei monumenti di Tolemaide negli anni 1935-1942*, *QuadALibya* 3, 1954, 33-66.

⁹⁵ Cf. unpublished report in the archive of the Department of Antiquity of Cyrenaica, Cyrene. The architect Luigi Turba reconstructed among others the triumphal arch standing on the *decumanus* – cf. G. Caputo, *Arco trionfale in Cirenaica*, in: *Atti del Terzo Congresso degli Studi Coloniali IV* (Firenze 1937) 133-137.

⁹⁶ G. Caputo, *Una basilica cristiana in Tolemaide*, in: *Comunicazioni presentate al Convegno Nazionale di Storia dell'Architettura 1938* (Roma 1940) 159-162.

⁹⁷ G. Pesce, *Il Palazzo delle Colonne in Tolemaide di Cirenaica*, *Monografie di Archeologia Libica* 4 (Roma 1950).

⁹⁸ G. Caputo, *Note sugli edifici teatrali della Cirenaica*, in: *Anthemon. Scritti di archeologia e di antichità classiche in onore di Carlo Anti* (Firenze 1954) 10-12, fig. 1; *Idem*, *Il teatro di Sabratha e l'architettura teatrale africana*, *Monografie di Archeologia Libica* 6 (Roma 1959) 65-69, pl. 93. In 1955 the research was continued for a brief period.



Antiquities Service launched further archaeological and conservation works in the buildings and porticoes of the Via Monumentale⁹⁹.

Soon after World War II Libya came under British Military Administration, and the care for antiquities in the region was taken over by the Antiquities Officer of the Administration¹⁰⁰. When Libya became an independent country, the newly created post of Controller of Antiquities in Cyrenaica was taken by Richard G. Goodchild (1953-1966)¹⁰¹. He was the initiator of many excavations in the cities of Cyrenaica, including Ptolemais. In years 1956-1964 he investigated the Odeon¹⁰², worked on a new plan of the city (the first one since the plan of the Beechey brothers), and conducted research on both topography¹⁰³ and monuments¹⁰⁴. In 1960 a British mission resolved to investigate the archaeologically unknown northern part of the city along the coast. As a result of works directed by R. M. Harrison, a Roman house with the Orpheus mosaic was unearthed¹⁰⁵. During the 1970s Britain's C. Arthur and Libyan archaeologist Abd es Salam Bazama conducted a survey in the vicinity of the city (especially on its eastern and southern sides) in order to investigate the course of the aqueduct supplying the city with water. The results of their research allowed for new conclusions to be made on the supply and distribution of water in the city¹⁰⁶. Archaeological work in Ptolemais

in the 1970s was continued on behalf of the Society for Libyan Studies by John B. Ward-Perkins, who discovered and investigated Houses G and T along the Via Monumentale¹⁰⁷. British archaeologists conducted the last very limited works in years 1988 and 1989 under the direction of J. H. Little¹⁰⁸.

Of great importance for the knowledge of Ptolemais was American research conducted by the Oriental Institute (Chicago) in years 1954 and 1956-58 under the direction of renowned archaeologist Carl H. Kraeling. After a preliminary field survey in Cyrenaica (May-June 1954) Kraeling, renowned investigator of Gerasa and Dura Europos, decided to launch excavations at Ptolemais. The obtained permit allowed for three campaigns, several months each. The American team, which besides C.H. Kraeling included architects G.R.H. Wright (British School at Ankara) and James Knudstad (Oriental Institute), as well as epigraphist Charles F. Nims (Oriental Institute), and worked in cooperation with Libyan and British archaeologists (including Richard G. Goodchild), investigated three buildings – a Roman Villa (known as the Villa of the Four Seasons), City Baths and a public building with attached baths by the Via Monumentale (now referred to in literature as the House of Paulus). Because of his personal interest and experience C.H. Kraeling extended his interest to the exploration of the site as a whole. The results of his studies allowed him to attempt to reconstruct the street grid and draw a city plan, sophisticated for its time. This was a significant contribution to the knowledge of urban development in the Eastern Mediterranean. The results of his detailed studies were published in the only monograph of the city to appear to date¹⁰⁹, which for many years functioned (along with

⁹⁹ The clearing of the section of the *decumanus* to the east of the *tetrastylus* to the Headquarters of the Dux was completed.

¹⁰⁰ C.G.C. Hyslop, *Cyrene and ancient Cyrenaica* (s.l. 1945).

¹⁰¹ R.G. Goodchild, *Libyan studies. Select papers*, ed. J. Reynolds (London 1976) XIII-XV.

¹⁰² R.G. Goodchild – C.H. Kraeling, The "Odeon" and related structures, in: C.H. Kraeling, *Ptolemais...*, 89-96.

¹⁰³ He was especially interested in matters concerning the location of the city forum – cf. R.G. Goodchild, The forum of Ptolemais (Cyrenaica), *QuadALibya* 5, 1967, 47-51.

¹⁰⁴ R.G. Goodchild, The Fountain of the Maenads at Ptolemais, *LibAnt* 1, 1964, 121-126; R.G. Goodchild – G. Caputo, Diocletian's Price Edict at Ptolemais (Cyrenaica), *JRS* 45, 1955, 106-115; R.G. Goodchild, The decline of Cyrene and rise of Ptolemais. Two new inscriptions, *QuadALibya* 4, 1961, 83-95.

¹⁰⁵ R.M. Harrison, An Orpheus mosaic at Ptolemais in Cyrenaica, *JRS* 52, 1962, 13-18.

¹⁰⁶ C. Arthur, Survey of the Roman aqueduct in Ptolemais, *LibSt* 4, 1972-1973, 7-8; *Idem*, The Ptolemais aqueduct: a description of its present condition and its course, *LibSt* 5, 1974, 24-29;

C. Arthur – A. Bazama, The aqueduct of Ptolemais, *LibyaAnt* 11/12, 1974/1975, 243-249.

¹⁰⁷ S.C. Gibbson – J.H. Little – J.B. Ward-Perkins, Excavations report: Ptolemais 1978, *LibSt* 9, 1978, 5-12; J. H. Little, Excavations in the North East Quadrant (Ptolemais). 1st interim report, *LibSt* 11, 1980, 37-43; J.B. Ward-Perkins – J. Little – D.J. Mattingly – S.C. Gibbson, Town houses at Ptolemais Cyrenaica. Summary report of survey and excavations work in 1971, 1978-79, *LibSt* 17, 1986, 109-153.

¹⁰⁸ J.H. Little, Note on the 1988/1989 seasons at Tolmeita, *LibSt* 21, 1990, 23-24.

¹⁰⁹ C.H. Kraeling, *Ptolemais...*



the account of the Beechey brothers) as a fundamental source of knowledge on Ptolemais.

Currently, systematic investigations conducted since 2001 by a mission of the Institute of Archaeology of the University of Warsaw allow for the updating and broadening of our knowledge of Ptolemais. Polish studies are

aimed, on one hand, at creating a modern archaeological and topographical plan of the city, on the other – at examining an *insula* in the eastern part of the city. The effect of the first phase of exploring the *insula* is the largely uncovered residential and industrial complex called the Villa with a View (House of Leukaktios).

II. The topography of Ptolemais in travellers' accounts

When the first travellers arrived to Ptolemais in the 18th and 19th centuries, the city was a vast sea of ruins. This large area encircled by walls had been left at the mercy of weather conditions, plentiful vegetation and wildlife practically since the 7th century. The city did not suffer from damage during the Arab invasion, nor was it completely abandoned. Arab settlement occupied the north and west edges of the ancient city and although blocks from ancient structures were often re-used for construction purposes, the centre remained largely intact. Ancient Ptolemais has been marked on nautical charts since the medieval period. Portolana give various versions of its name: Tolometa, Tolometta, Talameta, Tolmietha, Tulameta, Tolumeta, Tolmitsa, Tolmischa, Talameta¹¹⁰.

According to the 12th-century Arab geographer al-Idrisi, it was a large, fortified city that owed its prosperity to its port frequented by ships from Alexandria¹¹¹. This is confirmed by maps, e.g. that of Andrea Benincasa dating from 1476, which shows it “portant un pavillon ou double flamme, frangé d’azur, frangé brodé de gueules”¹¹², or an anonymous map from the 16th century, on which next to the name Tolometa there is a pictogram showing lavish Islamic architecture¹¹³.

Among the travellers (Ptolemais was mentioned by over a dozen persons known to have visited the ancient city) it is possible to distinguish those who meticulously documented their visit by conducting a detailed field survey and those who only made general remarks on the most clearly visible monuments. Those who visited Ptolemais in Autumn were undoubtedly privileged. In the Spring, when the lush vegetation starts to grow, traces of architecture are much more difficult to see. In turn, starting September, when the plants have died during the dry summer, even faint traces of buildings are discernible. These observations especially apply to the western part of the city, closer to the walls, where vegetation was particularly prolific¹¹⁴.

Often the description of monuments was preceded by information on the city's remarkably favourable location (between the sea and the escarpment) and its dimensions, which each of the travellers provided according to the measure used in his country of origin¹¹⁵. The travellers often reached for ancient sources when recounting the history of the city and when attempting to identify individual monuments.

Only few travellers searched for traces of city walls. Their excellent state of preservation was mentioned already by James Bruce, but as it has been explained above – this could have been the result of his confusion of two centres that he had visited in a great hurry, that

¹¹⁰ G. Oliverio, Il decreto di Anastasio I su l'ordinamento politico-militare della Cirenaica. Inscrizioni di Tocra-el Chamis, Tolemaide, Cirene, Documenti antichi dell'Africa Italiana II, 2 (Bergamo 1936) 255.

¹¹¹ Géographie d'Edrisi, traduite de l'arabe en français, d'après deux manuscrits de la Bibliothèque du Roi et accompagnée de notes par P. Amédée Joubert, in: Recueil de voyages et de mémoires V-VI (Paris 1836-1840) 293.

¹¹² J. Lelewel, Géographie du moyen âge (Atlante), Nordenskiöld's, Facsimile Atlas (Stockholm 1899).

¹¹³ BNF, Département des Manuscrits, Division occidentale, Fr. 2794

¹¹⁴ This phenomenon was observed by the Beechey brothers during their first visit to the city. Thick vegetation concealed the remains of the walls so well that they remained unnoticed. Only several days later – when some of the plants had been removed, the walls were sufficiently cleared to enable the tracing of their entire course.

¹¹⁵ The English unit of measurement was the English foot (0.3048 m); the French – the royal foot (0.3248 m), 1 English mile (1835) – 1609,34 m.



■ **fig. 4**

Tauchira Gate: A. 1825 (by J.-R. Pacho, *Relation d'un voyage dans la Marmarique...*, pl. 68, Square of the Cisterns visible in the background); B. 2006 (photo M. Rekowska)

is Tauchira and Ptolemais¹¹⁶. Paolo Della Cella¹¹⁷ was convinced that the city did not have any walls. Several travellers (the Beechey brothers, James Hamilton, E.A. Porcher and R.M. Smith, George Dennis, Heinrich Barth¹¹⁸) noticed remains of walls, which to careful observers were visible in the field despite their poor state of preservation. Their fullest description is owed to the

¹¹⁶ D. Roques holds an opposing view, arguing that J. Bruce described the real state of the walls without confusing any facts – cf. D. Roques, *Synésios de Cyrène et la Cyrénaïque du Bas Empire* (Paris 1987) 88, note 27.

¹¹⁷ P. Della Cella, *Viaggio da Tripoli...*, 131.

¹¹⁸ J. Hamilton, *Wanderings...*, 144; R.M. Smith – E.A. Porcher, *History of the recent discoveries at Cyrene...*, 65; G. Dennis, *On recent excavations...*, 151; H. Barth, *Wanderungen...*, 401.



Beechey brothers, who recreated and plotted practically the entire course of the walls on the western side, partly on the southern side (though not without errors, as, for instance, they interpreted the remains of the circus as walls) as well as fragments on the eastern and northern sides. They estimated the length of the walls to “less than three English miles and a half (480 feet less) [or 5 500 m]; its length, from north to south, something less



than a mile (480 less) [or 1463 m], and its breadth from east to west something more than three-quarters (440 more) [or 1341 m]"¹¹⁹.

The Beechey brothers were also the only ones to notice a structure in the eastern part of the walls, which, as they stated with much caution, may have been the relic of a gate. "We could not discover any traces of a gateway in the eastern wall of the city; but it is probable that there was formerly one on this side also, leading to the upper bridge, where some very strong works are still extant, in the form of a curve, as will appear by a reference to the plan"¹²⁰. However, as the explorers concluded, to confirm this hypothesis excavations were necessary, but they themselves lacked the time and funds to carry them out.

There were no doubts as to the interpretation of the remains of the western gate, seen and mentioned by most of the travellers (fig. 4). Although the structure was half-buried under ground until the beginning of the 20th century¹²¹, few visitors failed to guess its function correctly. Currently the Porta Tauchira, called so from the city accessed by the road running through it, a gateway comprising two large, square towers, is the best-preserved element of the city's fortifications, built in the 3rd century B.C. and restored under Justinian.

The gateway was briefly mentioned in accounts by Granger and Padre Pacifico¹²². Some more information can be obtained from the account of the ever-reliable Beechey brothers, who reported that it is a freestanding structure towering over the city like a triumphal arch, although it was originally part of the ramparts. J.-R. Pacho mentioned "deux constructions massives, espèce de pylône à inclinaison égyptienne qui paraît avoir formé l'entrée de la ville"¹²³. In the work of E.A. Porcher and R.M. Smith the authors praised the superb structure of the great gate and meticulously described its construction technique. The description was illustrated with a

drawing¹²⁴. H. Barth called it imposing but tasteless. Much more useful are his remarks on inscriptions on the blocks, several of which he read and copied¹²⁵. He was actually not the first person to do so, as already Granger noticed that some blocks carry mason's marks in the form of Greek letters, meant to make the construction work easier for the builders. James Hamilton, in turn, noticed that the blocks of which the gate had



■ *fig. 5*
Italian inscription on the Tauchira Gate, 2008 (photo M. Bogacki)

been built bore not only original mason's marks, but also modern inscriptions, the clumsiness of which appalled him: "Fox's and many other names, carved with a knife on the old walls at Eton, are far better specimens of calligraphy"¹²⁶. Already in the early 20th century there was an Arab cemetery close to the gate¹²⁷ and in the early colonial era a detachment of Italian soldiers was stationed there (fig. 5)¹²⁸. The gate was excavated and partly reconstructed by Giacomo Caputo in 1936¹²⁹.

The defence system and ramparts were complemented by bridges, which, built across deep wadis, ensured communication with the gates. Relics of bridges were found exclusively on the eastern side of the city.

¹¹⁹ F.W. Beechey – H.W. Beechey, *Proceedings...*, 376, 377, 378

¹²⁰ *Ibidem*, 378.

¹²¹ The gate was unearthed and partly reconstructed by Giacomo Caputo in 1936 – cf. G. Caputo, *La protezione...*, 33–66.

¹²² A. Laronde, *Aspects méconnus...*, 196–197; Padre Pacifico, *Rélation succincte...*, 30.

¹²³ J.-R. Pacho, *Relation d'un voyage dans la Marmarique...*, 179.

¹²⁴ R.M. Smith – E.A. Porcher, *History of the recent discoveries at Cyrene...*, 65, pl. 51.

¹²⁵ H. Barth, *Wanderungen...*, 398.

¹²⁶ J. Hamilton, *Wanderings...*, 145.

¹²⁷ G. Oliverio, *Federico Halbherr in Cirenaica...*, 252.

¹²⁸ Soldiers from the division carved their names on blocks that lie scattered around the gate until today.

¹²⁹ G. Caputo, *La protezione...*, 33–66.



■ *fig. 6*

Bridge: A. 1881 (by M. Camperio, *L'Esploratore* 1882, 64);
B. 2009 (photo M. Rekowska)

The Beechey brothers were the only ones to locate vestiges of such a structure at the mouth of the “wadi” by the sea, while another bridge in the central part of the walls, supporting an aqueduct, was registered by most visitors and some of them (Porcher, Camperio) even recorded it on their drawings (fig. 6).

Relics of port structures attracted the attention of few travellers. A part of these ruins disappeared under water as a result of the great earthquake of 365 A.D. and what remained was hardly discernible. Sometimes, when the sea was rough, they were completely invisible, as indicated by the testimony of C. Lemaire: “il n’a pas d’aparance qu’il y aye jamais eu des ports”¹³⁰. However, J.-R. Pacho noticed enigmatic remains under

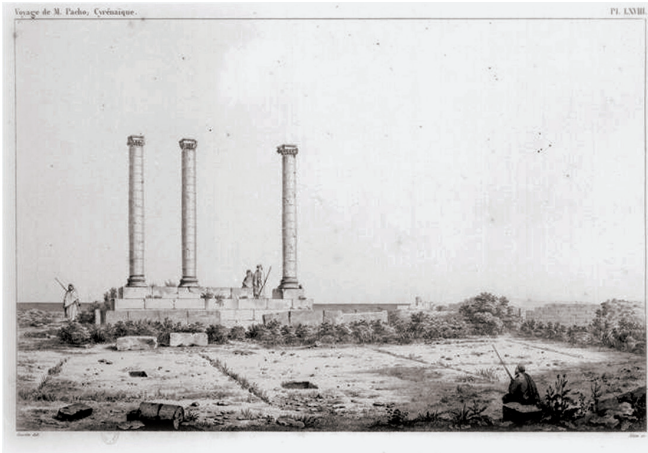


water¹³¹. This part of the city was in intensive use in the post-antique period and was therefore most exposed to destruction and/or alteration.

The most detailed description is owed to the Beechey brothers, who had a particular interest in all

¹³⁰ C. Lemaire, in: H. Omont, *Missions archéologiques...*, 1042.

¹³¹ J.-R. Pacho, *Relation d’un voyage dans la Marmarique...*, 178.



■ **fig. 7**

Square of the Cisterns: A. 1825

(by J.-R. Pacho, *Relation d'un voyage dans la Marmarique...*, pl. 68); B. 2008 (photo M. Bogacki)



port structures due to the objective of their mission. Their curiosity was sparked especially by the north fragment of the ramparts, which they considered a part of port fortifications connected with the wharf and breakwater, the so-called “*naustathmos* (or naval station), built for the protection of vessels; they begin from the wall, following the line of the beach towards the mouth of the western ravine, and were themselves protected from the sea by a breakwater of about fourteen feet in thickness [or 1.2 m]”¹³². According to their account, the port was protected by two forts (no longer in existence, but marked on the English plan – cf. fig. 2). Further on, they conjectured that the lighthouse must have been located next to the eastern fort, while on the west fallen columns and other architectural fragments indicated the presence of storerooms and other “structures [...] for the accommodation of the merchants and sailors”. On the western side of the promontory the explorers found relics they assumed to be dry docks (9 to 12 m wide, divided by walls ca. 2 m in width). A dozen or so years later also H. Barth had an opportunity to inspect the ruins in the port. Barth, like the Beechey brothers, thought the city’s port to be located on the eastern side of the promontory, where the eastern breakwater created a well-protected bay that opened to the north. He remarked that for a

city this size such a harbour shed was relatively small (ca. 250-280 m long and ca. 120 m wide). So detailed a prospection was possible probably because when H. Barth, and perhaps also the Beechey brothers, visited Ptolemais the sea withdrew slightly, allowing closer investigation¹³³.

Heading eastward as they explored the city, the visitors encountered a very interesting complex whose purpose is as debatable today as it was then. Previously interpreted as agora or forum, it is now referred to as the Square of the Cisterns (Piazzale delle Cisterne) – (fig. 7). It is a large (ca. 60 × 70 m) square with mosaic flooring, surrounded by a portico. It may be the remains of a gymnasium. Underneath, an enormous cistern (hence the name given to the area) was partly built and partly hewn in the rock to store rainwater or water carried by the aqueduct from a source located ca. 20 km to the east. The cistern itself is a series of crypto-porticoes consisting of 21 vaulted galleries. The travellers described both the subterranean and the above-surface parts of the complex.

Granger reported “trois colonnes faites de plusieurs pierres qui formaient autant qu’on en peut juger le devant d’un parvis”¹³⁴. James Bruce, who visited Ptolemais somewhat later, mentioned three Ionic columns supporting a richly decorated architrave interpreted them as a fragment of a colonnade of an Ionic Temple¹³⁵. Paolo Della Cella simply noted several columns assembled of

¹³² F.W. Beechey – H.W. Beechey, *Proceedings...*, 377.

¹³³ H. Barth, *Wanderungen...*, 400-401.

¹³⁴ A. Laronde, *Aspects méconnus...*, 194.

¹³⁵ J. Bruce, *Travels to discover the sources of Nile...*, XLI.



drums and standing on a mosaic¹³⁶. According to the Beechey brothers, the columns, the fragmentary mosaic and remains of rich architectural detail indicate that this was rather a palace or another official monumental building¹³⁷. J.-R. Pacho (like J. Bruce) suspected that the columns were a relic of a *pronaos* of a Roman temple¹³⁸, Porcher and Smith wrote with a dose of hesitation about a mosaic pavement enclosed in a portico, as indicated by fallen Doric and Ionic columns and a lack of traces of structures within – “the most conspicuous objects among the ruins of the city”¹³⁹. George Dennis cautiously wrote about a “royal portico”, recalling the words of Synesius (*Epist.* 57)¹⁴⁰. H. Barth, in turn, expressed a belief that the function of these three columns cannot be determined because they stand on a foundation which has two Hellenistic inscriptions built into it¹⁴¹, and the lack of other Hellenistic elements¹⁴² prevents the establishment of a secure dating and an unequivocal interpretation of the function of the monument. G. Rohlf, who thought that the entire square was surrounded by a colonnade in Ionic order on an elevated stylobate up to 1.2 m in height, was completely mistaken. The square, measuring 73 by 67 m, was surrounded only with a Doric colonnade. On Pacho’s drawing of 1825 a single Doric column is visible in the south-western corner (currently standing columns were reconstructed by Italian archaeologists). F. Halbherr considered the entire structure to be an agora or forum due to its location (in the city centre) and its representative character. He interpreted the podium with two (in 1910) columns (he noticed the remains of two more lying nearby) as a monumental entrance, *propylaea*, and thought the pilaster with a Doric engaged column in the south-eastern corner to be a relic of a colonnade. His

hypothesis was long considered correct¹⁴³, but currently the square is thought to be a central part of a gymnasium¹⁴⁴. Built in the Hellenistic period (2nd century B.C.), it was later altered several times. Originally four Ionic columns stood on a platform which was probably adorned with statues of Hellenistic rulers. In the Late Roman period the structure was altered using i.a. material from Hellenistic buildings (including inscribed blocks) and the whole structure was transformed into monumental rostra – fig. 8).

The building, one of the most emblematic structures of the city (as indicated i.a. by the fact that as many as five out of a dozen or so drawings with views or plans of the ruins in Ptolemais show the square in question), has been gradually falling into ruin since the 18th century. On a preserved drawing by J. Bruce from 1767 one can see an architrave supported by three columns, which must have collapsed, since neither Pacho nor Beechey drew it half a century later. The three Ionic columns were still visible in 1895 according to Weld-Blundell’s account. By the beginning of the 20th century, however, one of them fell and Senator De Martino, travelling in 1904, only registered two of them. This gradual degradation of the monuments was due partly to natural causes and partly to intentional activity. F. Halbherr mentioned the blowing up of columns by the local inhabitants in order to obtain the metal elements linking their drums. The current state of preservation of the pavement and colonnade is the result of reconstruction works carried out by Italian archaeologists before the Second World War¹⁴⁵.

The subterranean structure stirred even greater curiosity, although its function was in no way controversial and it was unanimously interpreted as a huge water reservoir (fig. 9). Granger mentioned the cistern¹⁴⁶; P. Della Cella described it in somewhat greater detail (a structure divided into nine spaces separated with thick

¹³⁶ P. Della Cella, *Viaggio da Tripoli...*, 132.

¹³⁷ F.W. Beechey – H.W. Beechey, *Proceedings...*, 382.

¹³⁸ J.-R. Pacho, *Relation d’un voyage dans la Marmarique...*, 179; II 382, pl. 59.

¹³⁹ R.M. Smith – E.A. Porcher, *History of the recent discoveries at Cyrene...*, 66.

¹⁴⁰ G. Dennis, *On recent excavations...*, 151.

¹⁴¹ CIG III 5184, 5185.

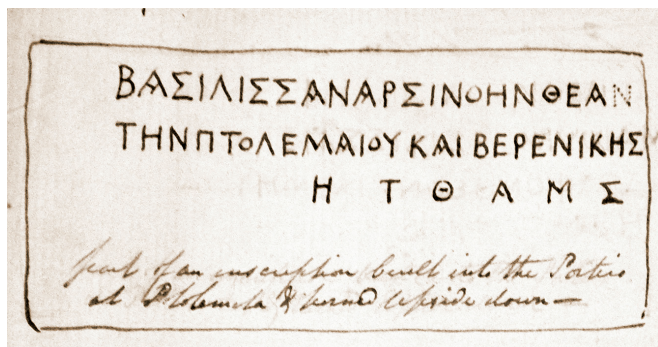
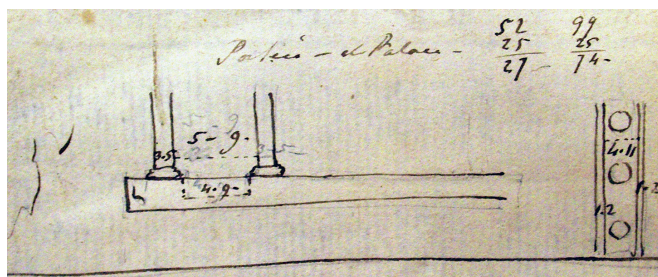
¹⁴² H. Barth, *Wanderungen...*, 401.

¹⁴³ Among its supporters were G. Caputo and G. Pesce. It was also popularised by the author of the guide published in 1929 (Libia, Guida d’Italia del T.C.I..., 478-479).

¹⁴⁴ M. Luni, *I ginnasi a Tolemaide e in città della Cirenaica in età tolemaica*, in: E. Jastrzębowska – M. Niewójt (ed.), *Archeologia a Tolemaide* (Roma 2009) 58-84 (especially 58-67) – older bibliography collected therein.

¹⁴⁵ G. Caputo, *La protezione...*, 33-36.

¹⁴⁶ A. Laronde, *Aspects méconnus...*, 194.



■ **fig. 8**

Inscriptions: A. Rostra by Beechey, Bailey Drawings 3 reverse – detail; B. CIG III 5184 (by Beechey, Bailey Drawing 2 obverse, British Museum © Trustees of the British Museum); C. 2009 (photo M. Rekowska)

walls). The reservoir was briefly mentioned by Padre Pacifico, Barth, and Rohlfs¹⁴⁷. Broader descriptions are owed to the Beechey brothers, Pacho, and Porcher and Smith. The latter two painstakingly penetrated the cistern crawling on their hands and knees and sometimes on their stomachs, as exploration was hindered by rubble and other refuse accumulated over the centuries). Later they described the “chamber, about one hundred feet long [or ca. 30.5 m] and twenty feet broad [or ca.

6 m], completely arched over, from which we passed through a series of about half a dozen similar vaults, all of apparently the same size, and connected with each other by doorways in the walls below the springing of the semicircular arches of the roofs. They were beautifully built of ashlar-work, and lined with cement”. J.-R. Pacho described the huge underground structure divided into nine corridors built of worked stone blocks¹⁴⁸. The Beechey brothers noted the presence of two rows of arched chambers with round openings from above, which served as sources of light, entrances, and openings for collecting rainwater¹⁴⁹.

The monumental structure, most probably erected in the Hellenistic period, was altered in the time of Roman rule and must have been in use also in the Late Roman period, as indicated by its excellent state of preservation in modern times. It consists of 21 interconnected chambers (13 on the east-west axis and 8 on the north-south axis) with a total volume of ca. 5500 m³.

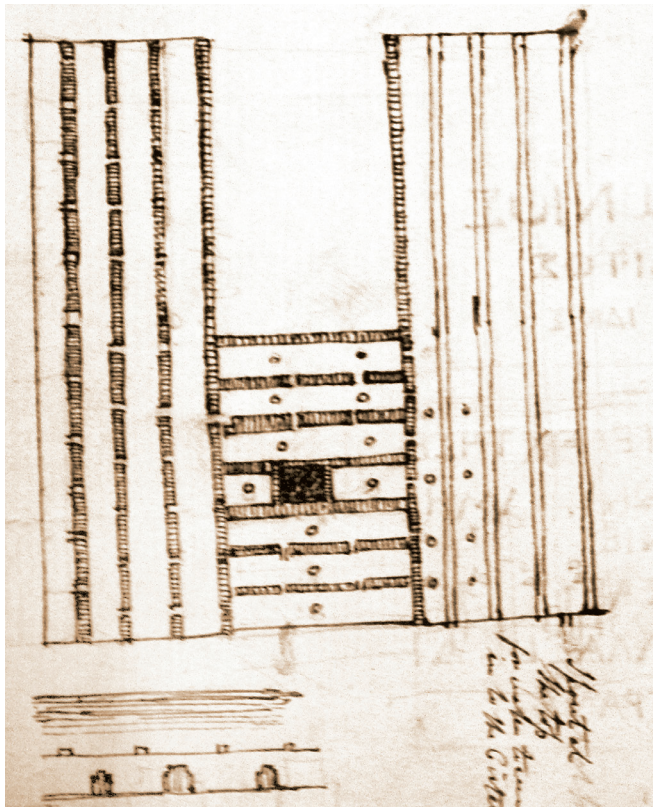
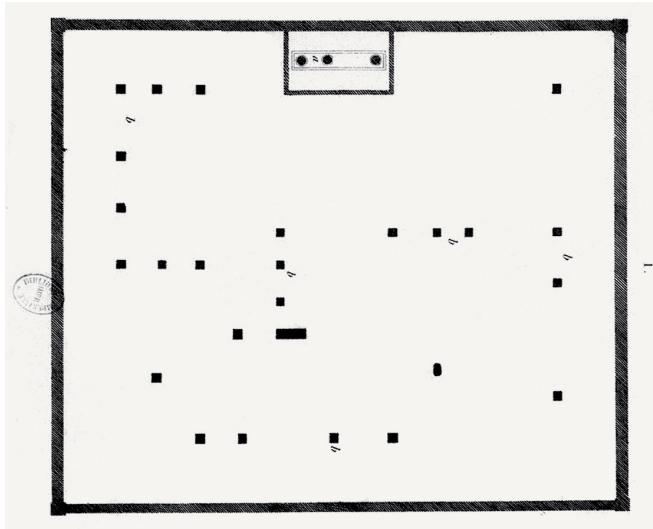
For fear of lack of water the inhabitants of Ptolemais made sure to build a developed system of cisterns for storing both rainwater and water conducted from a source located at a distance of over 20 km from the eastern city limits. Pacho, the Beechey brothers, Porcher and Smith, as well as Rohlfs addressed the question of the city’s water supply. Besides discussing water reservoirs, they mentioned aqueducts that conveyed water from the mountains to the city¹⁵⁰ and then distributed it to various buildings. On their city map the Beechey brothers plotted two bridges in the eastern “wadi”, one of which (the northern one) supported an aqueduct. The plan also shows an aqueduct running through the town centre between the Square of the Cisterns and a building left undefined by the Beechey brothers (now known to be Late Antique baths) and located by the main street of the city, Via Monumentale. Rohlfs followed the aqueduct that led from the Square of the Cisterns to the north-east. He was convinced that it supplied water to a large bath complex. Such was his

¹⁴⁸ J.-R. Pacho, *Relation d’un voyage dans la Marmarique...*, 179.

¹⁴⁹ F.W. Beechey – H.W. Beechey, *Proceedings...*, 357, 362.

¹⁵⁰ J.-R. Pacho, *Relation d’un voyage dans la Marmarique...*, 181; R.M. Smith – E.A. Porcher, *History of the recent discoveries at Cyrene...*, 65; F.W. Beechey – H.W. Beechey, *Proceedings...*, 362.

¹⁴⁷ Padre Pacifico, *Rélation succincte...*, 28; H. Barth, *Wanderungen...*, 401; G. Rohlfs, *Von Tripoli nach Alexandrien...*, 160.



■ **fig. 9**

Cisterns: A. 1825, ground plan (by J.-R. Pacho, *Relation d'un voyage dans la Marmarique...*, pl. 59, 1); B. underground plan (by Beechey, *Bailey Drawings 2 obverse*, British Museum © Trustees of the British Museum); C. 2008 (kite photo by M. Bogacki)

interpretation of a building consisting of two large chambers with preserved arched ceilings. “Ein aus der Cisterne nach Norden führender Aquaeduct leitet zu einem grossen Bade, von dem zwei Gewölbe noch vollkommen gut erhalten sind”¹⁵¹. The only visible bath

complex in Ptolemais, dated to the 4th-5th century, was located in the centre of the city. Currently discernible by the Via Monumentale is an octagonal basin and 2 *caldaria* in the south part of the building. In the 19th century the whole structure was not clearly visible, therefore it was mentioned by few travellers, namely the Beechey brothers¹⁵² and Porcher and Smith¹⁵³.

J.-R. Pacho saw fragments of the aqueduct that conveyed water from the mountains. He considered it the city's main water supply and he connected the decline of Ptolemais in the 4th century with the destruction of the aqueduct: “par la négligence des préteurs romains, il tomba en ruines à une époque antérieure au règne de Justinien, ce qui occasionna parmi les habitants une

¹⁵¹ G. Rohlfs, *Von Tripoli nach Alexandrien...*, 161. A similar interpretation was recorded in the guide published in 1929. It is now identified as the House of Two Cisterns.

¹⁵² F.W. Beechey – H.W. Beechey, *Proceedings...*, 383.

¹⁵³ R.M. Smith – E.A. Porcher, *History of the recent discoveries at Cyrene...*, 67.



telle pénurie d'eau, qu'ils se virent la plupart forcés de désertier la ville"¹⁵⁴.

In Ptolemais the constant water shortage was combated by building a whole system of large and small cisterns throughout the city. Aside from the descriptions of the huge water reservoir, 19th-century travellers also included mentions of other cisterns. On the Beecheys' plan, outlines of cisterns are featured in the south-western part of the city, at the foot of the escarpment¹⁵⁵. In the vicinity of the great cistern James Hamilton noticed the remains of two smaller reservoirs¹⁵⁶. Porcher and Smith, Rohlf, and Dennis¹⁵⁷ made note of several cisterns in various locations in Ptolemais.

Some of the 19th-century travellers described monuments unnoticed by earlier expeditions. Starting from the visit of the Beechey brothers, almost every account contained observations on entertainment-related structures such as the amphitheatre and theatres. As a result of the common practice of using already published travel accounts as guidebooks, every ambitious traveller who held their description in his hands practically followed in their footsteps, searching the site for structures they had mentioned, wishing to confirm the provided information and not necessarily to add his own.

The amphitheatre located in the western part of the city seems to have been built in the city's oldest quarries in ca. 2nd or 3rd century A.D. (the quarry partly extends beyond the city walls). On the plan provided by the Englishmen the building marked with number 6 is circular in plan, which agrees with the current state of knowledge (it is an ellipse measuring 47 × 44 m). Already in the 19th century (as now) the amphitheatre was very poorly preserved, but its form and rows of seats hewn in the rock were discernible. J. Hamilton, G. Rohlf, G. Dennis – travellers who undoubtedly used the Beecheys' account as a guide (they mention it repeatedly)

made note of this structure also in their accounts¹⁵⁸. Other visitors omit it entirely.

According to the current state of research, there were at least three theatres in Ptolemais. The largest one, the so-called Upper Theatre, built on the slope of the escarpment probably in the 3rd century B.C., remained unrecognised through the 18th and 19th centuries. Mentioned, however, were the two smaller theatres, both located near the Square of the Cisterns.

The Beechey brothers followed by other travellers made note of the theatre located to the south-west of the Square of the Cisterns. The theatre, referred to as the "large" or "larger" theatre, was marked with number 5 on Captain Beechey's plan. Although the structure was destroyed by an earthquake already in Antiquity, in the 19th century it was in a much better state of preservation than today. One of the Beecheys' drawings that was probably not published with their account registers (besides the plan) a view of one *parodos*, a profile of a pilaster and an octagonal base (fig. 10). It seems from the plan that the theatre's remains were clearly visible in the 1820s (albeit the eastern part was evidently better preserved). Based on the description in the account, the plan, and the notes it includes, it is possible to reconstruct the theatre. The semicircular *orchestra* had ca. 44 m in diameter; the audience was divided by vertical passages (the extant nine are marked) ca. 0.61 m in width and it measured ca. 74 m in diameter and over 14 m in depth. On the drawing the whole *cavea* is divided into 7? *cunei*, although only in two of them the division into rows of seats is recorded. Beechey also noted that the *orchestra* was much larger than in other theatres known to him and that the passages were proportionally broader compared to the width of a *cuneus*, which he estimated at ca. 1.25 m at the bottom. In turn, he did not find any traces suggesting the presence of horizontal passages, *praecinctiones*, between the seats. The lowest row of seats was located a few feet above the level of the *orchestra*, so there must have been a flight of steps leading up to it. He estimated the depth of the *proscenium* to ca. 7.5 m, although this part was in a much worse state of

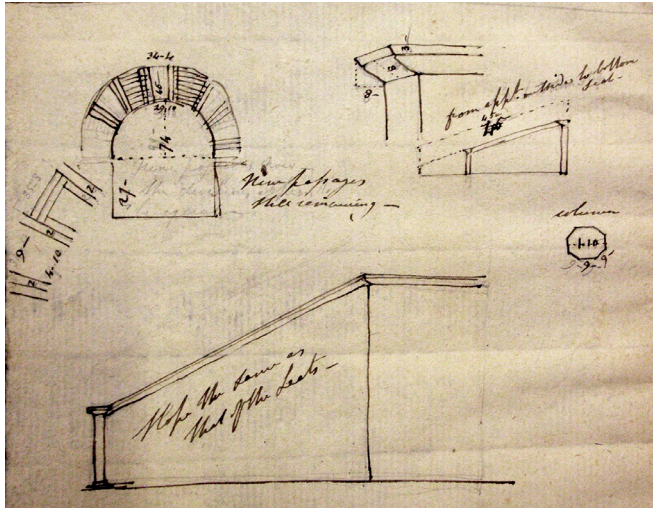
¹⁵⁴ J.-R. Pacho, *Relation d'un voyage dans la Marmarique...*, 181-182.

¹⁵⁵ F.W. Beechey – H.W. Beechey, *Proceedings...*, 362.

¹⁵⁶ J. Hamilton, *Wanderings...*, 143.

¹⁵⁷ R.M. Smith – E.A. Porcher, *History of the recent discoveries at Cyrene...*, 65-66; G. Rohlf, *Von Tripoli nach Alexandrien...*, 161; G. Dennis, *On recent excavations...*, 151.

¹⁵⁸ F.W. Beechey – H.W. Beechey, *Proceedings...*, 357, 380; J. Hamilton, *Wanderings...*, 144; G. Rohlf, *Von Tripoli nach Alexandrien...*, 160; G. Dennis, *On recent excavations...*, 152.



■ **fig. 10**

„Larger” theatre: A. 1822, plan, view of parodos, architectural details (by Beechey, Bailey Drawings 3 reverse, British Museum © Trustees of the British Museum); B. 2008, plan of the theatre and vicinity, consisting of a fragment of the Beechey plan (red) layered on the new plan (blue) and on a kite photograph (elaborated by W. Małkowski)



preservation. On the ground he noticed scattered vault fragments, originally from the passages.

H. Barth was critical of the theatre’s architecture, calling it “uninteresting in every way”, and J. Hamilton and H. Weld-Blundell only mention it¹⁵⁹. G. De Martino added information on ruins of a small temple in its vicinity, probably referring to the isolated column marked on the Beechey’s plan to the south-east of the structure¹⁶⁰.

Beechey assumed the state of preservation of the theatre to be the result of heavy rainfall, which probably caused the subsequent collapse of its elements. Less than a century later F. Halbherr noted that the state of the theatre deteriorated significantly. It may have been due to the fact that a road used by the local population ran alongside the supposed *frons scaenae* (as marked on the Beechey plan) and its proximity may have facilitated

transport and therefore also the dismantling of the entire structure. Today, when only modest remains are visible in the theatre’s location, the description and drawings of the Beechey brothers allow a reconstruction of this building, which (as indicated by the results of geophysical prospection) was part of a much larger complex.

The second theatre, referred to as the “smaller” one by the Beechey brothers, was considered too damaged to attempt anything beyond a general outline of its schematic shape (marked as no. 4 on the plan), which G. Rohlfs defined as semicircular. This modest-sized building with rows of seats built in a semicircle inscribed in a rectangle may have functioned as a *boul-euterion* during the Hellenistic era. It was transformed into an *odeion* during the Roman period and in the last phase of use it was adapted for staging *naumachiae*. It was uncovered and preserved by Italian archaeologists before the Second World War.

The two theatres in Ptolemais are mentioned in the account of George Dennis¹⁶¹ and Gerhard Rohlfs, but one of them “ist aber ebenso verfallen wie die übrigen, so dass bloß aus den halbmondförmigen Umrissen die einstige Bestimmung zu erkennen ist”¹⁶². A theatre was

¹⁵⁹ H. Barth, *Wanderungen...*, 402; J. Hamilton, *Wanderings...*, 144; H. Weld-Blundell, *A visit to Cyrene...*

¹⁶⁰ G. De Martino, *Cirene e Cartagine...*, 80; Probably the same remains were called “a sanctuary” by Halbherr (cf. caption of a photograph – G. Oliverio, *Federico Halbherr in Cirenaica...*, fig. 32).

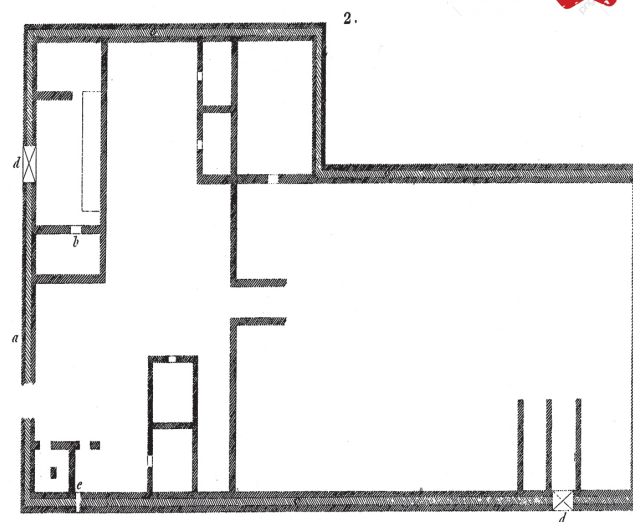
¹⁶¹ G. Dennis, *On recent excavations...*, 151.

¹⁶² G. Rohlfs, *Von Tripoli nach Alexandrien...*, 161.



also referred to by Giacomo De Martino¹⁶³ already in the beginning of the 20th century.

Of much interest to the travellers were also buildings dating from Late Antiquity and the one described most often was the Headquarters of the Dux, called “caserne, barracks”, “structure of very large dimensions”, “castello” (fig. 11). This Late Antique residence was built (re-using blocks from earlier buildings) at a time of unrest, when the defence of the city walls had become impossible. A thus-created fortress (one of many in Ptolemais), located in the north-eastern part of the city, became famous thanks to an inscription placed on its northern façade. It was a copy of an



■ **fig. 11**

Headquarters of the Dux: A. 1825 (by J.-R. Pacho, *Relation d'un voyage dans la Marmarique...*, pl. 59. 2); B. 2008 (kite photo M. Bogacki)

edict of Emperor Anastasius I (from 501) regulating the military organisation of Cyrenaica. The first mention of this building appears in the account by Granger, who calls it a “castle”¹⁶⁴. The inscription was first identified by James Bruce as early as 1766¹⁶⁵. The Beechey brothers saw a “huge structure” with well-preserved external walls, but a completely destroyed interior (marked as number 7 on the plan). They also made note of “three large quadrangular tablets of stone, built into the wall, each five feet in length by four in height, on which are

cut the Greek inscription”¹⁶⁶. To J.-R. Pacho this was one of the most important monuments in the city – he described it as Roman barracks encircled by a double moat and an additional wall, and he drew its plan¹⁶⁷. The French traveller was the first to report on the inscription¹⁶⁸ and he immediately made the results of his observations available to the scientific milieu in Paris. The inscription stirred great interest¹⁶⁹, as a result of which the three blocks bearing it were transported to the Louvre, where they are housed until today. This was done by Vattier de Bourville, whose actions had the full (also financial) support of the French government¹⁷⁰,

¹⁶³ G. De Martino, *Cirene e Cartagine...*, 79.

¹⁶⁴ A. Laronde, *Aspects méconnus...*

¹⁶⁵ D. Cumming, *James Bruce in Libya...*, 18.

¹⁶⁶ F.W. Beechey – H.W. Beechey, *Proceedings...*, 383.

¹⁶⁷ J.-R. Pacho, *Relation d'un voyage dans la Marmarique...*, 178, pl. 59. 2.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, 178, pl. 73; cf. CIG III 5187.

¹⁶⁹ J.-R. Pacho, *Relation d'un voyage dans la Marmarique...*, 179; cf. Letronne, *Sur quelques inscriptions inédites...*, 168; CIG III 5187 (= SEG IX 356).

¹⁷⁰ He mentions it in a letter of 3 April 1848 - Lettre de M. Vattier de Bourville à M. Letronne sur les premiers résultats de son voyage à Cyrène, RA 5, 1848 (1ère partie) 150-154.



■ **fig. 12**

Western Basilica: A. 1822 (F.W. Beechey – H.W. Beechey, *Proceedings...*, before p. 339); B. 2008 (photo M. Rekowska)

but his methods were very negatively regarded by later explorers. H. Barth still saw the blocks *in situ* (and he was probably the last one to do so), but according to the account he published after returning to Berlin, he knew about Bourville's enterprise¹⁷¹. James Hamilton, on a journey through Cyrenaica only a few years later, complains about the damage inflicted "by truly Vandalic hands"¹⁷² and reports small, chipped fragments of the inscription left on the ground. The German traveller Gerhard Rohlfs also refers to it in his account: "Die Inschriften welche sich früher an der Nordwand dieses Gebäudes befanden, und die nach Frankreich gebracht, von Latonne [Letronne] ergänzt worden sind, enthielten Vorschriften von Anastasius I., die Verwaltung und militärische Einrichtung betreffend"¹⁷³. The imposing building is also mentioned by Porcher and Smith as well as George Dennis¹⁷⁴.

Few travellers noticed the remains of a Basilica, of which only a fragment of the apse and several arches of the south nave were visible during the 18th and 19th centuries (fig. 12). It was interpreted as a part of the city fortifications by Granger and as a church by the Beechey

brothers, Hamilton mentioned a "ruined apse of a Christian church probably of the fourth century"¹⁷⁵, Dennis made a general note of Christian churches¹⁷⁶, and Rohlfs noticed "eine Kirche aus dem zweiten oder dritten [!] Jahrhundert, vom Westthore aus kommend nach links zu gelegen"¹⁷⁷.

The building was excavated and restored by Giacomo Caputo. The arch in the north-eastern chapel was mended and some of the collapsed arcades in the nave were reconstructed. Recurring symbols: Greek letters and ligatures on the blocks, suggest that they were re-used elements of an earlier structure. Since most of them are inscribed with ephoebic inscriptions, it is possible that they were originally from the gymnasium. The proximity of the Square of the Cisterns, which may have been a *palaestra*, seems to confirm such a hypothesis. Preserved Arabic graffiti indicate that the building was in use also after the Arab conquest¹⁷⁸.

¹⁷¹ H. Barth, *Wanderungen...*, 486, footnote 54.

¹⁷² J. Hamilton, *Wanderings...*, 143.

¹⁷³ G. Rohlfs, *Von Tripoli nach Alexandrien...*, 161. The Latonne whom he quotes is without a doubt a misspelled version of the name Letronne, who referred to the high scientific value of the mentioned inscription in a published letter (cf. J.-A. Letronne, *Sur quelques inscriptions inédites...*).

¹⁷⁴ R.M. Smith – E.A. Porcher, *History of the recent discoveries at Cyrene...*, 65; G. Dennis, *On recent excavations...*, 151.

¹⁷⁵ J. Hamilton, *Wanderings...*, 143.

¹⁷⁶ G. Dennis, *On recent excavations...*, 151.

¹⁷⁷ G. Rohlfs, *Von Tripoli nach Alexandrien...*, 160.

¹⁷⁸ Recently R.M. Carra Bonacasa, *La basilica occidentale di Tolemaide dallo scavo al progetto*, in: E. Jastrzębowska – M. Niewójt (ed.), *Archeologia a Tolemaide...*, 215-225; generally on the basilicas of Ptolemais, cf. E. Jastrzębowska, *Le basiliche cristiane sconosciute nel centro città di Tolemaide*, in: *ibidem*,



■ *fig. 13*

Western Necropolis: A. 1861 (by Porcher, watercolour in the British Museum, Dept. of Greek and Roman Antiquities © Trustees of the British Museum); B. 2008 (photo M. Bogacki)

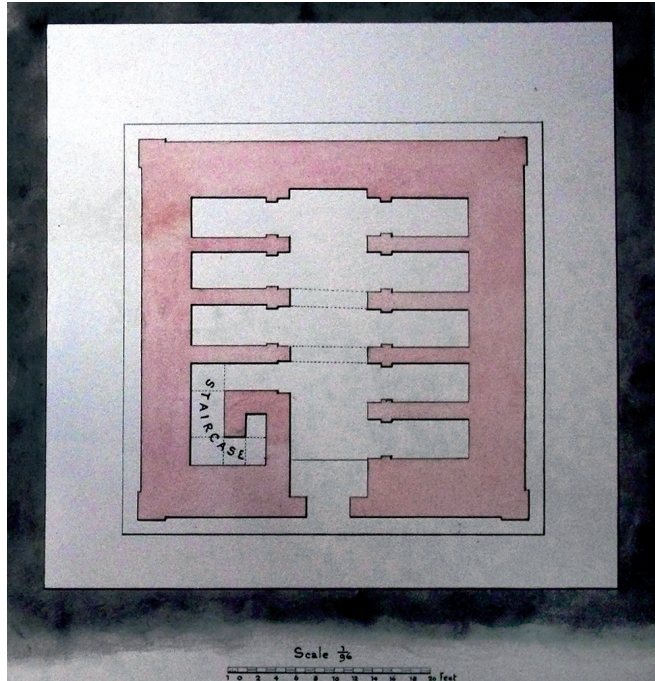
Mentions of other monuments of Ptolemais appeared only sporadically. This “sea of ruins” offered endless possibilities for observations and various inter-

226-238; E. Wipszycka, The basilicas at Ptolemais: a historian’s commentary on the results of archaeological exploration, *Światowit* 8 (49), fasc. A, 2009/2010 (2011), 51-67; functioning of the basilica during the Arab period, cf. S. Stucchi, Una fase architettonica araba nella struttura della basilica occidentale di Tolemaide, in: Da Batto Aristotele a Ibn El’As. Introduzione alla mostra (Roma 1987) 57-63; on architecture recently – J. Kaniszewski, Non-invasive investigation of the Western Basilica at Ptolemais, *Światowit* 8 (49), fasc. A, 2009/2010 (2011), 41-44.

pretations, although at present a secure identification of the abovementioned buildings is impossible without the support of systematic excavations; according to the words of the Beechey brothers: “and to the westward and south-westward of this building [Headquarters of the Dux] are many interesting remains of private dwelling-houses, palaces, baths &c, which require a great deal of excavation”¹⁷⁹.

In the central part of the city among the fallen columns the Beechey brothers noticed spirally decorated,

¹⁷⁹ F.W. Beechey – H.W. Beechey, *Proceedings...*, 383. Based on scarce topographical indications it can be assumed that the Beechey brothers recognised the scattered remains of residential complex investigated and published by Italian archaeologists, the so-called Palazzo delle Colonne – cf. also recently N. Bonacasa, Ancora su Tolemaide e Alessandria: riflessioni sul “Palazzo delle Colonne”, in: E. Jastrzębowska – M. Niewójt (ed.), *Archeologia a Tolemaide...*, 85-109.



small, colourful marble shafts and capitals: “fanciful and overcharged with ornament, originating from a large structure perhaps datable to the reign of Justinian”¹⁸⁰. The same part of the city was probably described by F. Halbherr. However, he indicated that the objects lay on one of the main streets, on which there was a “small sanctuary” and an honorific building of which only a rectangular platform remained¹⁸¹.

In their description the Beechey brothers most probably refer to the Via Monumentale, the *decumanus* of the city, which over a distance of at least 6 *insulae* was flanked by large porticoes with columns of various coloured stones – grey granite, striped “cipollino”, and white Prokonessos marble with lavish Corinthian capitals. At the western end of the Via Monumentale there was a triumphal arch (312-315) decorated with small spiral columns of black marble and at its eastern end stood a *tetrastylus*¹⁸², a Roman *arcus quadrifrons* refurbished in Late Antiquity (5th-6th century) adorned with monolithic columns with Corinthian Byzantine-style capitals.

In addition to their more or less elaborate descriptions, practically all travellers mentioned columns,

■ **fig. 14**

Mausoleum: A. 1861, plan (by Porcher, watercolour in the British Museum Dept. of Greek and Roman Antiquities © Trustees of the British Museum); B. 2008 (kite photo by M. Bogacki)

capitals and other architectural detail scattered throughout the city. However, based on such ambiguous and general notes it is difficult to identify them with specific structures.

As far as other ancient remains in Ptolemais are concerned, the greatest number of mentions concerns the necropoleis. Copious tombs of inhabitants were located to the west and to the east of the city walls (Della Cella counted more than 4000¹⁸³). Most of the travellers came on the road from Tauchira, therefore their descriptions usually began with the western necropoleis. Several cemeteries were found to the west of the city walls, but the most representative free-standing tombs were located along the road (fig. 13). Unfortunately, even as early as the 18th century only the outlines of these structures were usually visible. Based on several mentions and above all the Beechey plan, it is to be assumed that in the 18th and 19th centuries the greatest number of extant tombs (both cut in the rock and free-standing) was

¹⁸⁰ F.W. Beechey – H.W. Beechey, *Proceedings...*, 384-385.

¹⁸¹ G. Oliverio, *Federico Halbherr in Cirenaica...*, 251-252.

¹⁸² P. Pensabene, *Il tetrapilio di Tolemaide*, in: E. Jastrzębowska – M. Niewójt (ed.), *Archeologia a Tolemaide...*, 187-201.

¹⁸³ P. Della Cella, *Viaggio da Tripoli...*, 132.



found in the proximity of the western “wadi”, between the road and the “gebel”. In the best state of preservation was a complex of several tombs located in a pit of one of the quarries and among these tombs the most complete one was the so-called Mausoleum¹⁸⁴.

Granger, the first to mention the monument, did not attempt to identify it¹⁸⁵. He gave the building's outer dimensions and described the plan in detail: there were two halls of equal size, in the western hall there were steps leading to another room, which housed a staircase giving access to what he believed was the roof (the stairs in fact led to an upper floor – apparently destroyed already in the 18th century). To Paolo Della Cella, in terms of style the building resembled Egyptian tombs, which was in his view ascertained by the shape of the entrance with a triangular, corbelled arch. Also the interior division of space into galleries for burials was in his opinion an allusion to Egyptian traditions. Della Cella supported a hypothesis that such a large and monumental tomb must have been meant for someone of extraordinary status¹⁸⁶. In the account of the Beechey brothers an illustration depicting the monument complemented the description (“a huge, square family tomb, partly hewn in rock, lacking an inscription that may have originally been found above the doorway”)¹⁸⁷. The brothers also argued with their predecessor about the function of the tomb. Without excluding the possibility that it was meant for one of the Ptolemies, it seemed more probable to them that it was the burial place of a large (multigenerational) wealthy family. Pachó made a note of the triglyph and metope frieze adorning the outer walls of the building and his standard description is supplemented with illustrations showing the plan and façade view¹⁸⁸. Barth, besides providing a description of the Mausoleum (the shape, entrance in the form of a corbelled arch, the plan and exterior decoration)

recorded a poorly visible and unintelligible inscription (as he correctly stated – omitted by his predecessors): NVMEICIN¹⁸⁹. Detailed descriptions of the monument are owed to Porcher and Smith (illustrated with two drawings)¹⁹⁰, G. Dennis (“tower-tomb [...] the earliest monument in the necropolis of Ptolemais”)¹⁹¹, James Hamilton¹⁹², and Gerhard Rohlfs¹⁹³.

The Mausoleum (fig. 14) and nearby tombs were also registered on eight drawings, both in general view (4), and in façade view and plan (4). Depending on the skill, intelligence and knowledge of the authors the documentary value of their testimonies varies. Nearly contemporary plans by Beechey and by Pachó differ significantly in favour of the former (i.a. Pachó failed to notice a flight of steps in the south-western corner). Another plan drafted 40 years later did not provide any new information. In turn, the views of the exterior façades show a gradually progressing degradation of the monument.

The Mausoleum was surrounded by other tombs. In its closest vicinity, in the stone pit where it was located, there were much humbler tombs, though several travellers (Barth, Padre Pacifico, Dennis) also mentioned other, smaller but also free-standing mausoleum-type buildings¹⁹⁴. The other tombs, hewn in the rock, were adorned with bas-reliefs and inscriptions cut above the entrance. The view of P. Della Cella, who deems them similar to the rock tombs of Cyrene¹⁹⁵, was rejected by J.-R. Pachó – “au lieu de ces façades doriques, si variées

¹⁸⁴ On the Mausoleum itself and the detailed history of its discovery, cf. M. Rekowska-Ruszkowska, *The Mausoleum at Ptolemais in travellers' accounts*, *Archeologia Warsz* 58, 2007 (2009), 75-88, pl. 10.

¹⁸⁵ A. Laronde, *Aspects méconnus...*, 196.

¹⁸⁶ P. Della Cella, *Viaggio da Tripoli...*, 132.

¹⁸⁷ F.W. Beechey – H.W. Beechey, *Proceedings...*, 355-356, pl. 4.

¹⁸⁸ J.-R. Pachó, *Relation d'un voyage dans la Marmarique...*, 180-181, pl. 70; 71.

¹⁸⁹ H. Barth, *Wanderungen...*, 397, cf. also 485, footnote 41 where he explains that he may have quoted inscriptions from a neighbouring tomb.

¹⁹⁰ R.M. Smith – E.A. Porcher, *History of the recent discoveries at Cyrene...*, 67, pl. 52; 53.

¹⁹¹ G. Dennis, *On recent excavations...*, 152-153.

¹⁹² J. Hamilton, *Wanderings...*, 139.

¹⁹³ G. Rohlfs relied on Barth's description when visiting the necropolis and generally saw the same monuments as the latter – cf. G. Rohlfs, *Von Tripoli nach Alexandrien...*, 164.

¹⁹⁴ This broad and imprecise term is used to call tombs hewn in isolated rock formations in the *latomies* – cf. also S. Stucchi, *L'architettura funeraria suburbana cirenaica in rapporto a quella della chora viciniora ed a quella libya ulteriore, con speciale riguardo all'età ellenistica*, *QuadALibya* 12, 1987, 249-378.

¹⁹⁵ P. Della Cella, *Viaggio da Tripoli...*, 132-133.



RGB satellite image
merged with vectorized
plan made in 1826 by
F. W. Beechey



0 100 500 1000 meters
0 1000 2000 3000 Feet

■ **fig. 15**

Plan by Beechey, layered on a satellite image (elaborated by
W. Małkowski)



par leur styles, si élégantes par leurs proportions, qui décorent la nécropole de la capitale, nous ne voyons dans celles de Ptolémaïs que de petites, entrées grossièrement taillées dans le roc, mais couvertes d'inscriptions gravées irrégulièrement et à diverses époques"¹⁹⁶. In his account Pachó provided facsimiles of over a dozen inscriptions¹⁹⁷. Tombs and two (!) mausolea are mentioned by Padre Pacifico¹⁹⁸. J. Hamilton noticed "many large excavated tombs, one of which is remarkable, from the fact that the rock out of which it is fashioned has been cut away all round, and thus a monolithic monument, in the truest sense, produced"¹⁹⁹. The western necropolis was of special interest to H. Barth. He gave detailed descriptions of the architecture and decoration of the tombs carved in isolated rock formations, which were in modern times (as today) commonly used by the local population²⁰⁰ (the burial chambers served as dwelling places and goats were kept in the courtyards in front of the tombs²⁰¹). The tone of the accounts of Porcher and Smith²⁰² and Rohlf's²⁰³ was similar. Much more detailed remarks are owed to George Dennis, who came to Cyrenaica mainly interested in Greek necropoleis. The western cemetery, which he of course inspected in detail and briefly described, initially did not provoke his enthusiasm. Perhaps the reason was that, due to their "settlement" or earlier exploration attempts, he did not expect to find anything interesting there, and perhaps because although the façades of the tombs were carved with "Greek inscriptions they generally betray the Roman period". In turn, of particular interest to him were the tombs preserved on the eastern side, where he conducted systematic excavations. Among the tombs he noticed various types

of sepulchral features, such as "broken sarcophagi of late date, rock sepulchres, tombs closed with massive blocks, large caverns, rudely hewn in the rock, and separated into numerous *loculi*, each containing a skeleton [...] possibly Byzantine". G. Dennis conducted the exploration of the eastern necropolis with an eye to acquiring artefacts and provided information on the tombs he opened, which, though intact since antiquity, contained only (!) "bones, coarsest pottery, ordinary unfigured ware, sham jewellery found some; but these contained nothing but lamps and glass unguent vases". However, Dennis also managed to get hold of some objects of interest (in his opinion), among them "a draped female statue, few nice terracottas, painted vases". Nevertheless, having considered the results not spectacular enough, after a few days he went back to the western necropolis. There he found new types of tombs such as "sepulchres covered with flanged tiles, resting against each other, so as to form a penthouse over the corpse" and rock-cut tombs similar to those on the eastern necropolis. Some of them were said to have had the entrance blocked with carefully fitted stone blocks, sometimes even "cemented to the rock", which Dennis, who specialised in Greek tombs, had never seen before. Despite opening the tombs "one after the other", the explorer was less than satisfied with the finds, which included plain pottery, poor-quality jewellery and broken *diotæ* (amphorae). For the exploration G. Dennis had the full approval and financial support of the British authorities, which he mentions several times²⁰⁴. Indeed, the register of objects he acquired from Cyrenaica includes artefacts from Ptolemais, among them a bracelet in the form of a snake²⁰⁵. He was not, however, a pioneer of exploration on the necropoleis in Ptolemais (and in other cities of Cyrenaica), as activity of this kind had already been conducted by Vattier de Bourville²⁰⁶. However, the scale of his pursuits is difficult to ascertain, as mentions in his

¹⁹⁶ J.-R. Pachó, *Relation d'un voyage dans la Marmarique...*, 179.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibidem*, II, pl. 74-77; 79; 79 (!).

¹⁹⁸ Padre Pacifico, *Rélation succincte...*, 29.

¹⁹⁹ J. Hamilton, *Wanderings...*, 139.

²⁰⁰ H. Barth, *Wanderungen...*, 398.

²⁰¹ This phenomenon was already known in Late Antiquity, when many poverty-struck inhabitants sought refuge in tombs that were ready for use – cf. S. Stucchi, *Architettura cirenaica* (Roma 1976) 501, 511.

²⁰² R.M. Smith – E.A. Porcher, *History of the recent discoveries at Cyrene...*, 67, pl. 52.

²⁰³ G. Rohlf's, *Von Tripoli nach Alexandrien...*, 163.

²⁰⁴ G. Dennis, *On recent excavations...*, 152, 153-156, 158.

²⁰⁵ *Ibidem*, 163; British Museum Register of Acquisitions: 1867.05.12. 25, 34, 35; cf. also J. C. Thorn, *Explorers of Cyrene...*, 572-574.

²⁰⁶ According to a letter of the British Consul General in Tripoli to Viscount Palmerston at the Foreign Office – British Museum Central Archive, Original Letters and Papers XLI 1848, no. 6; cf. also J. C. Thorn, *Explorers of Cyrene...*, 557.



correspondence are lacking and their only testimonies are objects that were found in Ptolemais and must have come from tombs.

Mentions of Ptolemais appear in accounts penned by over a dozen people known to have visited the city, not just heard about it from others. The accounts vary not only in length (some authors only briefly mention the antiquities, while others devote many sentences to them), but above all in reliability and precision. Thus, the quoted accounts of travellers differ in value. This results from many factors – the nature of the journey, specific interests of the individuals and their education. In terms of their attitude towards antiquity the visitors can be divided into at least three large groups: travellers, explorers, and researchers. The first group includes the pioneers of travel in Cyrenaica and Libya as a whole: Granger, Agostino Cervelli, Paolo Della Cella, Padre Pacifico da Monte Cassiano, as well as several later tourists like James Hamilton. The researchers are above all James Bruce, Jean Raymond Pacho and the Beechey brothers, but this group should also include the two emissaries of Prussian authorities – Heinrich Barth and Gerhard Rohlfs, owing to their education and precision of topographical descriptions. Among the explorers, who focused on acquiring artefacts (an activity which was sometimes supplemented by documentation and research), were Vattier de Bourville, Porcher and Smith, and George Dennis. The visitors often prepared valuable documentation (plans and elevations of monuments), which can be helpful in reconstructing the ancient architecture. Even though the three most frequently drawn structures were the Tauchira Gate, the Mausoleum and the Rostra, thanks to Bruce's drawings we can picture the entablature of the colonnade in the Square of the Cisterns. Several objects were portrayed on drawings and etchings especially frequently for their picturesque appearance and good state of preservation. Out of 22 known illustrations depicting architecture, eight focused on the Square of the Cisterns, another eight – on the Mausoleum and nearby tombs in the quarry. There were two images of the Tauchira Gate and another two of the bridge on the eastern side of the walls, one depiction of the Headquarters of the Dux and one of the Western Basilica.

In conclusion to this overview of information on monuments of Ptolemais seen and interpreted by 18th-

and 19th-century travellers, the great value of documentation prepared by the Beechey brothers is worth stressing. Their plan is still admired for its accuracy. Reprinted 40 years later by Porcher and Smith, for a century and a half it remained a fundamental source for researchers studying the city's topography with minor additions. It was not until the second half of the 20th century that the plan was supplemented with new structures and especially the street grid, since only a few streets had been identified by the Beechey brothers. Excavations corroborated most of the structures they had marked on their plan and to appreciate the quality and precision of their measurements one only needs to compare the early 19th-century map with the recent satellite image (fig. 15). Minor inconsistencies are due to limitations of the equipment they used, but their keen eye and intuition supported by knowledge merit recognition even today²⁰⁷.

Three of the abovementioned accounts (Della Cella, Beechey brothers and Pacho) were widely known and quoted. Their popularity widespread readership is reflected in the fact that an abridged compilation of their accounts was published in 1829 by the Polish journal "Kolumb". Thanks to this text also the Poles could learn that "w Ptolemaidzie widzieć można pomniki znakomite starożytności i bardzo pięknie zachowane marmury" ("in Ptolemaida one can see splendid monuments of antiquity and superbly preserved marbles")²⁰⁸.

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²⁰⁷ M. Rekowska-Ruszkowska, W Ptolemais 200 lat po braciach Beechey, czyli o znaczeniu relacji podróżniczych dla współczesnych badań archeologicznych, *Meander* 2008, no. 1-4, 213-238.

²⁰⁸ Wiadomości o Cyrenajce i mieście Cyrene zebrane z opisów podróży: kapitana Beechey, P. della Cella i J.-R. Pacho osobno w różnych czasach odbytych, in: *Kolumb. Pamiętnik opisom podróży lądowych i morskich poświęcony* (Warszawa 1828/1829) 57-68. I am grateful to Piotr Jaworski for bringing this article to my attention.



List of prints and drawings of Ptolemais

Plan:

- F.W. Beechey, Plan des ruines de Ptolometa et des environs, présentement Dolmeta (BNF GE D-4015 [1828]);
F.W. Beechey, Ptolemais Chart (Hydrographic Office Chart C.67);
F.W. Beechey, Plan of the City of Ptolemeta (F.W. Beechey – H.W. Beechey, Proceedings..., page not numbered before chapter XII, p. 339);
E.A. Porcher, General map of the Cyrenaica: Tolmeita or Ptolometa (R.M. Smith – E.A. Porcher, History of the recent discoveries at Cyrene..., pl. 1);

Square of the Cisterns:

- J. Bruce, Ionic Columns (Windsor Castle; drawing);
J.-R. Pacho, Plan des ruines d'un temple situé à Ptolémaïs (J.-R. Pacho, Relation d'un voyage dans la Marmarique..., pl. 59. 1);
J.-R. Pacho, Vue des ruines d'un temple à Ptolémaïs (*ibidem*, pl. 68);
H.W. Beechey, Remains of an Ionic Building at Ptolemeta (F.W. Beechey – H.W. Beechey, Proceedings..., page not numbered before chapter XII, p. 339);
H.W. Beechey, Portico – built is not reversed; Inscription VII; Inscription VIII; Inscription IX (British Museum, Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities, Bailey Drawing 2 reverse);
H.W. Beechey, Plan of the cisterns beneath the Square of the Cisterns at Ptolemais (British Museum, Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities, Bailey Drawing 2 obverse);
H.W. Beechey, Portico – at Palace (British Museum, Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities, Bailey Drawing 3 reverse);
E.A. Porcher, Ruins of Ptolemais (watercolour in the British Museum, Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities = R.M. Smith – E.A. Porcher, History of the recent discoveries at Cyrene..., pl. 50);
M. Camperio, Ruine d'un monument Ionico a Tolometa (da un disegno di H. Beechey, L'Esploratore 1882, p. 65);

Western Gate:

- J.-R. Pacho, Vue des ruines de la Porte Occidentale de Ptolémaïs (J.-R. Pacho, Relation d'un voyage dans la Marmarique..., pl. 68 [!]);
E.A. Porcher, Gateway in the western wall of Ptolemais, (R.M. Smith – E.A. Porcher, History of the recent discoveries at Cyrene..., 66, pl. 51);

Bridge:

- H.W. Beechey, Remains of an Ancient Bridge at Ptolemeta (F.W. Beechey – H.W. Beechey, Proceedings..., page not numbered before chapter XII, p. 339);
M. Camperio, Ruine di un ponte romano a Tolometa (da uno schizzo dell'autore, L'Esploratore 1882, p. 64);

Mausoleum and other tombs:

- J.-R. Pacho, Vue des monuments funéraires, situés à l'ouest des ruines de Ptolémaïs (J.-R. Pacho, Relation d'un voyage dans la Marmarique..., pl. 70);
J.-R. Pacho, Plan, coupe intérieure et details du grand tombeau situé à l'ouest de Ptolémaïs (*ibidem*, pl. 71);
H.W. Beechey, Large Tomb (British Museum, Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities, Bailey Drawing 4 obverse);
H.W. Beechey, Large Tomb – plan of the second stage (British Museum, Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities, Bailey Drawing 5);
H.W. Beechey, Remains of an Ancient Mausoleum at Ptolemeta (F.W. Beechey – H.W. Beechey, Proceedings..., page not numbered before chapter XII, p. 339);
E.A. Porcher, Plan of a conspicuous Tomb on the western side of the city (watercolour in the British Museum Department of Greek and Roman antiquities = R.M. Smith – E.A. Porcher, History of the recent discoveries at Cyrene..., pl. 53);
E.A. Porcher, Tombs to the Westward of Ptolemais (watercolour in the British Museum Department of Greek and Roman antiquities = R.M. Smith



– E.A. Porcher, History of the recent discoveries at Cyrene..., pl. 52);

M. Camperio, Ruine di un Mausoleo a Tolometa (da uno schizzo dell'autore, L'Esploratore 1882, p. 63);

Dux headquarters:

J.-R. Pacho, Plan d'une ancienne caserne de la même ville (J.-R. Pacho, Relation d'un voyage dans la Marmarique..., pl. 59. 2);

Basilica:

H.W. Beechey, Remains of an early Christian Church at Ptolemeta (F.W. Beechey – H.W. Beechey, Proceedings..., page not numbered before chapter XII, p. 339);

Theatre:

H.W. Beechey, Theatre (British Museum, Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities, Bailey Drawing 3 reverse);

Inscriptions:

H.W. Beechey, (...) part of an inscription built into the Portico/at Ptolometa & turned upside down, Inscription VI (British Museum, Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities, Bailey Drawing 2 obverse);

H.W. Beechey, Cippus, Inscription X, XI (British Museum, Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities, Bailey Drawing 3 obverse);

J.-R. Pacho, Inscription grave sur une caserne antique à Ptolémaïs (J.-R. Pacho, Relation d'un voyage dans la Marmarique..., pl. 73);

J.-R. Pacho, Inscriptions de Ptolémaïs (*ibidem*, pl. 74);

J.-R. Pacho, Inscriptions de Ptolémaïs (*ibidem*, pl. 75);

J.-R. Pacho, Inscriptions de Ptolémaïs (*ibidem*, pl. 76);

J.-R. Pacho, Inscriptions de Ptolémaïs (*ibidem*, pl. 77);

J.-R. Pacho, Inscriptions de Ptolémaïs (*ibidem*, pl. 79);

J.-R. Pacho, Inscriptions gravées sur les tombeaux de Ptolémaïs (*ibidem*, pl. 79 [!]);

E.A. Porcher, Inscriptions over the Entrances to the Tomb of Ptolemais (R.M. Smith – E.A. Porcher, History of the recent discoveries at Cyrene..., pl. 54).